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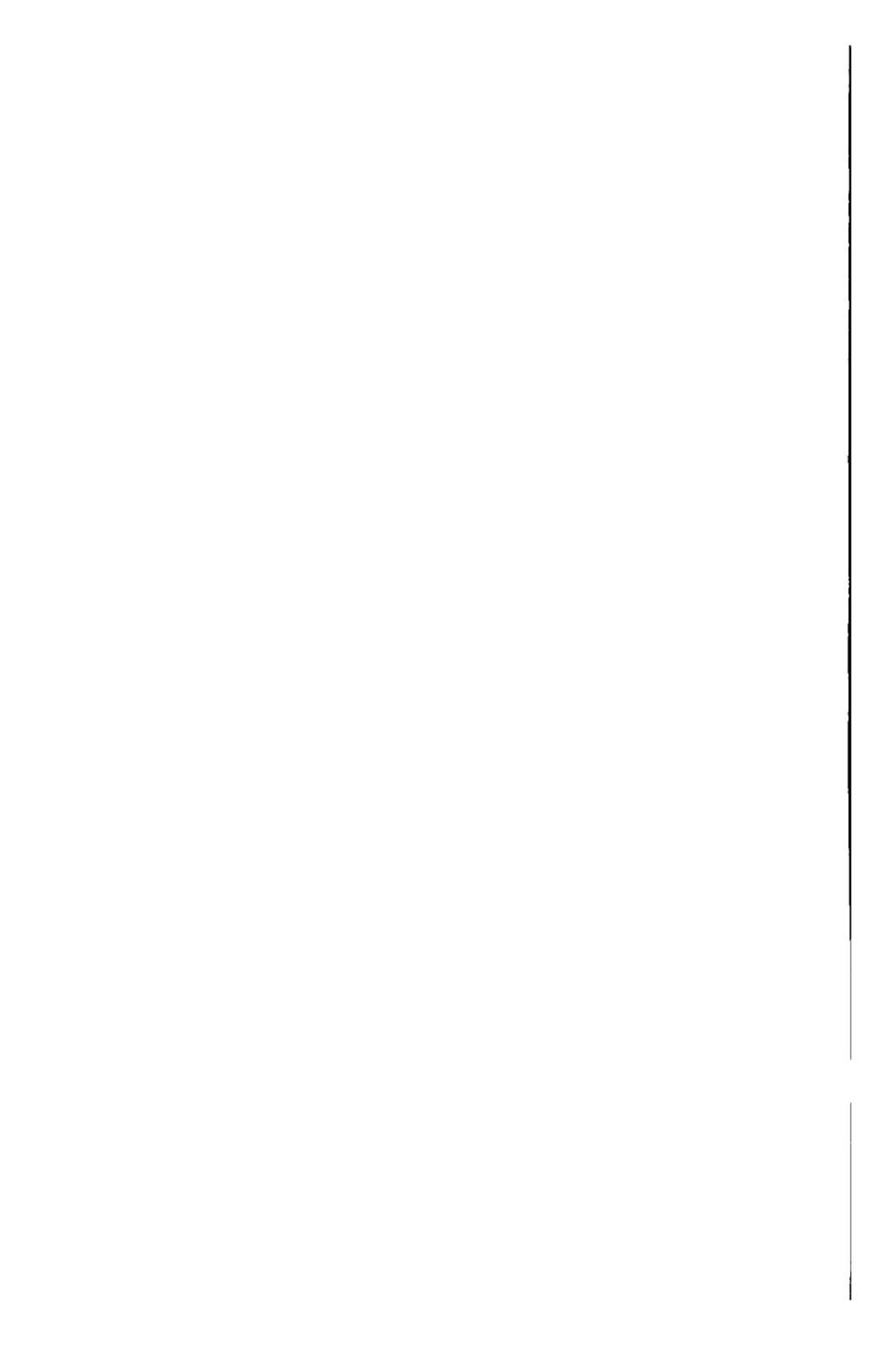
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**A WHALEMAN'S WIFE**



**A WHALEMAN'S WIFE**

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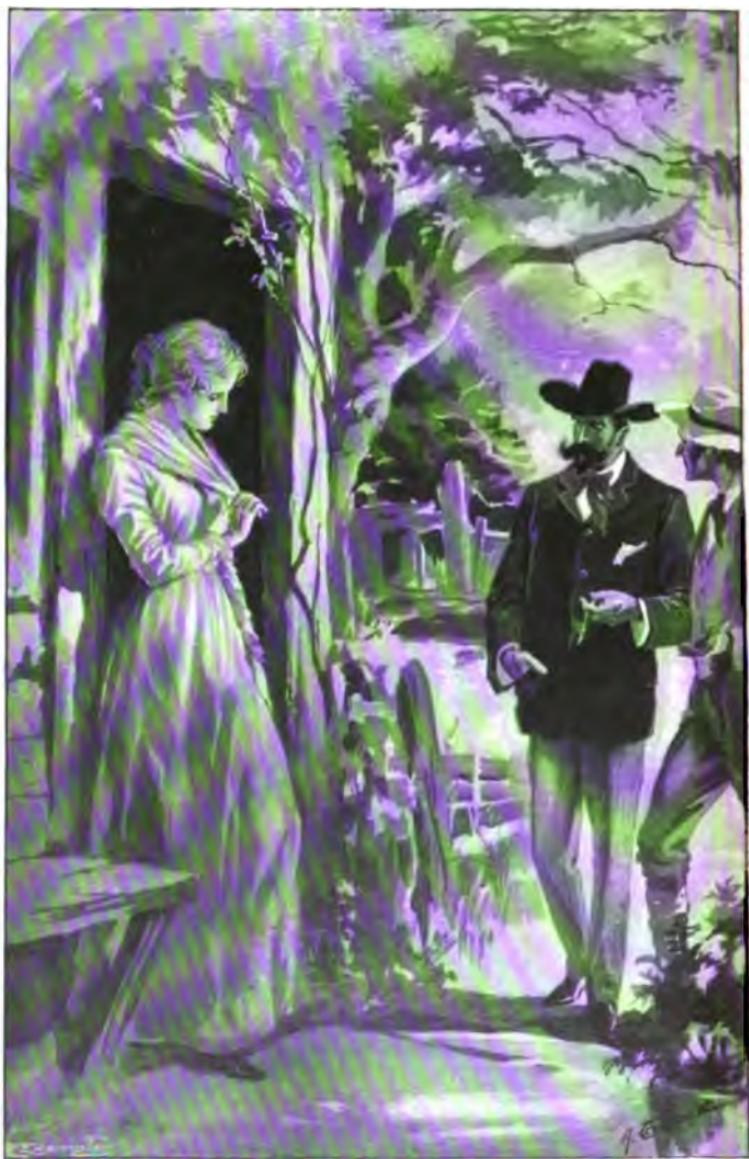
**THE APOSTLES OF THE SOUTH-EAST.**

**WITH CHRIST IN SAILORTOWN.**

**THE PALACE OF POOR JACK.**

**THE WAY THEY HAVE IN THE NAVY.**





SHE STOOD THERE FRAMED IN THE PORTAL LIKE A GRACEFUL PICTURE.

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# A Whaleman's Wife

By Frank T. Bullen



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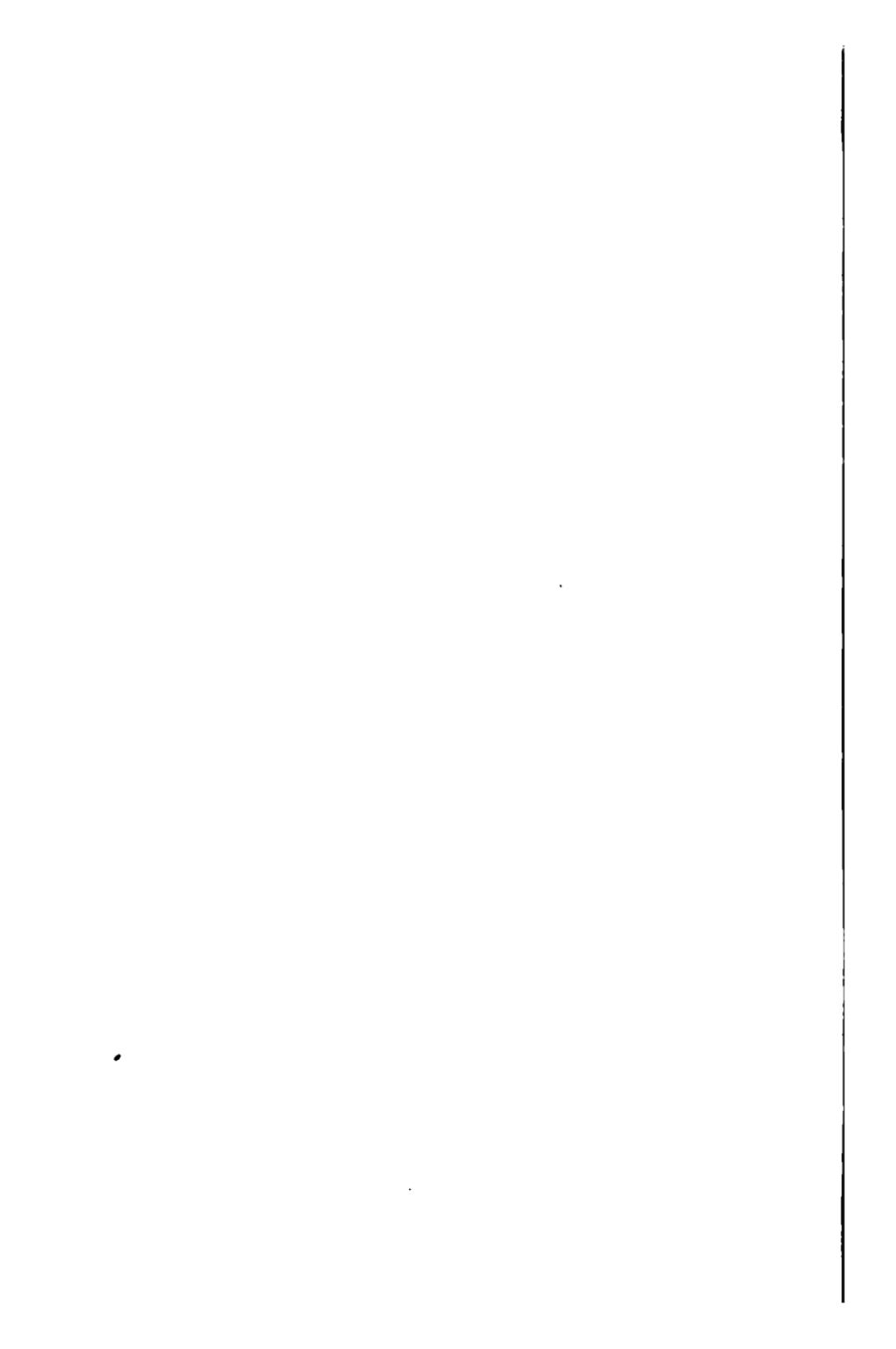
TO

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

**PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**A SMALL TOKEN OF THE AUTHOR'S ESTEEM**

**FOR A STRONG CHRISTIAN**



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## CHAPTER I

### UNREQUITED LOVE

'YEW don' seem ter keer any gret amount fer me, Pris.'

The speaker was a young man of twenty or thereabouts, whose loosely jointed frame showed, even under the shapely rig of homespun, consisting of just a shirt and pants, a promise to the observant eye that he would presently develop into a man of massive mould. He lay upon the stubbly ground, his head resting on one arm, looking wistfully up into the face of a girl about his own age. His clean-shaven face wore that keenness of outline so characteristic of the true Yankee blend in which the broad Saxon or Frisian features seem to have been modified by the sharp facial angles of the indigenous owners of the soil. But in the softness of his grey eyes a close observer would have foreseen a well of trouble springing up for their owner on behalf of others. It was the face of the typical burden-bearer.

In her face, on the other hand, there were evident manifestations of discontent and weariness of restraint. A healthy, pleasant countenance enough, with dark brown eyes and curling hair, well-shaped nose and

short upper lip just spotted with freckles. The eyes looked, however, as if they could harden and grow black upon occasion, while the square chin and firm curve of the shut mouth told a plain tale of self-will. There was just a touch of petulance in the quick movement of her head as she replied :

' You're so exactin', Rube. An' surely you wouldn't want me to be a hypocrite an' gush over you when I don't feel a bit like it. The honest fact is that I like you better than anybody I've ever seen, but you know I haven't seen many people at all ; and as for the men folks about here, they're almost as dull and stupid as the cattle themselves. An' more than that, Rube, I'm afraid I don't know what this love is that you seem to be et up with, an' I'm not going to say I do to please anybody.'

There was silence. Over the wide stretches of newly reaped land not a breath of air was stirring ; at evening's beckoning finger the voices of the day were hushed. It was nearing the gloaming of one of those heavenly days common in Vermont towards the end of harvest, when Nature seems to be contemplating in satisfied peace the result of her summer's fruitage, and baring her bosom to the mellowing sun for a while, as if to store up warmth against the coming of the fierce blasts of the bitter Northern winter. The smell of the patient earth was sweet, restful in its effect upon the senses, and insensibly moulding impressions upon the mind that would remain through life ineffaceable by any subsequent experiences, and assert themselves in after-years by vivid reproductions of the present scene. Yet the calm beauty of their surroundings

had upon each of the two young people an almost entirely opposite effect. He was permeated with a serene sense of satisfaction with life in all its details but one—if only he could be certain that Priscilla loved him! Born and bred upon the typical Green Mountain farm, educated up to the simple standard of the village school, and utterly unacquainted with the seething world beyond his horizon, he was as nearly happy as it is good for man to be in this stage of his existence. His parents, although, like himself, New Englanders born and bred, had somehow escaped from the soul-withering domination of that cruel creed that finds an awful satisfaction in the consignment to eternal fires of all who by one hair's-breadth should dare to differ from its blindly ignorant conception of theology. Love formed the basis of their faith, and their ideas of an immanent God were mainly derived from the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Under such mild influences it was hardly wonderful that Reuben Eddy had early 'got religion,' in the queer phraseology of the States, although in his case, as in that of his parents, there was scarcely any point of resemblance common to the ordinary religious professor. Following none of the orthodox forms of worship, and pretending to no formulated creed, the Eddys lived and moved and had their being in a quiet consciousness of the friendliness of God. They looked as if they would at no time have been surprised, as they certainly would have been unafraid, to see His face with their mortal eyes. They seemed to love God, as birds sing, from an inward impulse

that is not a duty but a part of the organism, as natural a necessity as the breath or the heart-beat. Yet, or perhaps because of this, they were intensely human. There was none of that aloofness from the interests of their kind that some excellent people regard as the hall-mark of a Christian. In fact, they were a lovable family whose influence was like that of the spring sun upon all (though they were but few) with whom they came in contact.

Within this last year or two, however, Reuben had felt the deep placid current of his life strangely disturbed. His life-long playmate, Priscilla Fish, whose parents' farm (three miles away) was the nearest to that of the Eddys, had suddenly assumed a totally different appearance in his eyes. For some time he went about dreamily wondering whatever the change could be that had at once removed her so far above the category of ordinary, everyday people, and at the same time had made him long for her society so ardently that every hour spent away from her seemed to drag, and every thought was shot through and through with side-issues about her. Now between him and his father there had been a life-long intimacy, gently sought and fostered by the elder man as soon as Rube was old enough to know him. Thus they were more than father and son—they were David and Jonathan, with no secrets from one another. So after Reuben had wrestled with this new experience long enough to be able to reduce it to some formulable expression, he took it to his father, as he had done every other difficulty as long as he could remember. The old man listened in sympathetic silence while his son described his symptoms with a gravity that would

have been ludicrous but for its earnestness and sincerity. How he felt like a caged bird until he saw Priscilla, yet when she appeared he became hot and cold by turns, and felt so awkward and clumsy that he wanted to hide himself in the earth, and so on, in the same old way that was all so new and disconcerting to him.

Very gently the old man explained matters to him, winding up with a merry twinkle in his eyes, as he said :

' Haow en the name er pashense yeu've shun clar ov this complaint all these years ez er merricle. Ef I know ye—en I ain't so dead certain of that as I wuz —yew're just the kinder lad to fall in love fust go. Anyhow, I'm goin' ter chip in 'n 'elp ye if it kin be did et all.'

With all his fatherly instincts aroused, the fine old fellow trudged over to his neighbour's farm that same evening, and sought out old man Fish. In quaint fashion, and blaming himself whimsically for his lack of observation in not seeing how things were going before, he explained the situation, finding, much to his gratification, that Priscilla's father was entirely agreeable to the match. Solemnly the two patriarchs discussed ways and means, planning all manner of pleasant things for the future of their children as far as their sober wishes would allow them. That Reuben and Priscilla should marry, inherit the Eddy homestead, and glide placidly along through life as their parents had done, seemed to these two fond old hearts as roseate a prospect as could be desired. So they sat on, exchanging their slow-moving thoughts, until long past their usual early hour for bed. After

a long pause, Farmer Eddy stretched himself with a yawn and said :

‘Wall, Zeke, I reckon I’ll be gittin’ to’rds hum. Seems ter me we ben havin’ er mighty long yarn to-night, ‘relse I’m most amazin’ sleepy. Good-night t’ye.’

There was no reply. It was perfectly dark, for they had been sitting in the barn, and when the night closed softly down they had not thought to get a lamp, in their earnestness of conversation. Slightly raising his voice, Farmer Eddy repeated his salutation, but it fell upon the unresponsive darkness around like a pebble dropped into a deep well. With a chill creeping over his scalp the old man reached forward to where his friend was sitting and groped for his hand. It was some seconds before he could find what he sought, and when he did, the truth sank into his marrow instantly : Ezekiel Fish was dead.

Trembling in every fibre, Eddy hastily made for the house, coming into the well-lighted living-room with his message in his face. The family, consisting of Mrs. Fish, her two grown-up sons, and Priscilla, were all seated there, eagerly discussing a knotty point in some book Priscilla had been reading aloud, but the entry of the old man and their first glance at his face froze them into silence. Going straight up to the mother, Eddy laid his trembling hand upon her shoulder, and said, ‘Hepziber, the Lord be good t’ye. He’s taken away yew’re husband.’

There was no outcry. Priscilla came swiftly to her mother’s side and tried to soothe the heavily stricken woman, whose silent suffering was pitiful to see ; while the two sons and the old man, bearing

lights, returned to the barn and reverently carried in the body. The usual sad offices were soon rendered to the remains, and with slow, uncertain steps Eddy returned home to tell his sorrowful story and warn Reuben that, for the present at any rate, a prior claim to attention had been made upon their neighbour's family.

Some months, therefore, elapsed before anything of the matter that lay so close to his heart passed Reuben's lips. But he was by no means impetuous, and besides, he had always been trained to subordinate his wishes to those of others, so that while his love was undoubtedly rooting and grounding itself more firmly every day, he was able to abstain from all mention of it to its object. Summer came, and with it an opportunity during a long Sunday afternoon's ramble with Priscilla to broach the important matter to her. She listened—somewhat listlessly, it is true, but still she listened ; while Rube, growing bolder as he went on, and marvelling at his own powers of speech, poured out to her his hopes and plans. But no enthusiasm could hold out long under the unconcealed air of indifference with which his fervent speech was received, and he soon sobered down to wonder quietly how it was she took his vehemence so coolly. Being ready, however, to supply all deficiencies from his own abundant stock, he was not unduly depressed. And as the days went by his sweet sunny temperament asserted itself, and hope, almost amounting to certainty, arose within him that she would presently, as he had done, find all things changed under the new light of love. Yet in spite of his hopefulness, a weary sense of the hilly

road he was travelling would occasionally give him serious pause, and he grew hungry for some return, however slight, of his lavish affection. And it was with one of these moods that this chapter and the story open.

## CHAPTER II

VENI, VIDI, VICI'

AFTER the death of Ezekiel Fish the care of the farm devolved upon the two brothers, both of them typical Yankee farmers, but without a trace of the kindness so characteristic of the Eddys. Rube had never been a favourite with them. They dared not despise him openly—he was too big and strong for that ; but they spoke of him behind his back in terms of disparagement, and did all in their power to discourage the slightest feeling of affection for him that they imagined their sister to have. Jake, the elder brother, a man some three years older than Rube, had by virtue of his seniority assumed full charge of affairs, and already had begun to launch out in various speculative ways that troubled the old lady sorely. His visits to Boston 'on business' were frequent and prolonged, and already he was becoming known to a few of his less reputable associates as a 'feller that wuz makin' things hum a bit.'

In these altered circumstances it was no wonder that Rube pressed his suit more earnestly than ever. His unselfish nature was fully alarmed for Priscilla's immediate future, and his anxiety on her behalf gave his love an added lustre which it had lacked before. But to his distress and chagrin, the

steady growth of his affection did not awaken in her the slightest responsiveness. To a stranger it would have been at once manifest that she merely tolerated the young man ; even to his love-blinded perceptions the fact stubbornly persisted in revealing itself. Rube endured this coldness patiently for months, until on the evening of the commencement of our story he had drifted almost unconsciously into a protest against this treatment of himself by Priscilla who, if she had never given him any encouragement worth speaking of, had at least tacitly accepted him as a lover. She had received his complaint in the manner already specified, speaking the exact truth about the state of her feelings towards him as far as she knew them. The trouble was that she had not quite realised the strength of a feeling of unrest and discontent with her surroundings which had been steadily eating into her mind for months past. It was largely due to her brother Jake, who, in the elated condition generally noticeable on his return from Boston, was wont to launch into extravagant praise of city life with its light and bustle and abundant enjoyments. Naturally he was correspondingly contemptuous of the well-ordered procession of days characteristic of the country. The majestic harmonies and sweet confidences of Nature, the changeful orchestra of each day, and the placid stillness of the nights, had become to his dis-organised ideas like the stagnation of death. His was that subtle malaise that stealthily undermines the natural order of things, and, leaving the countryside to go out of cultivation, herds men and women together in vast feverish crowds to stew and fret

and die, but never to return to the quiet of the country again.

This miserable change had, without her knowledge, infected Priscilla also in such a manner that now every task was irksome, the stillness of the evenings almost unbearable. Irritability, which had never before disfigured her character, became increasingly noticeable. Even Rube saw the change, but could not dream of its cause, and innocently added to it by his dog-like untiring affection. Matters were in this unsatisfactory state when one evening the sound of wheels through the crisp air warned the inmates of the Fish place that Jake was returning from one of his Boston jaunts. Priscilla dropped her knitting and went to the door which looked across the wide paddock down the road. To her surprise she saw in the fast approaching buggy two forms. Jake was bringing a visitor! The prospect of any break in what had now become almost an intolerable monotony so affected her that she felt nearly intoxicated, her face flushed rosily, and a tingling thrill that was almost pain rushed all over her. Yet she could not move, but stood there framed in the portal like a graceful picture, while the buggy drew up at the roadside and the men alighted. As they came across the paddock towards her she saw that the stranger was tall and stalwart, walking with the easy loose-jointed swing of the smart sailor. He was dressed in the garb of an ordinary well-clothed townsman, but a wide sombrero, of brown velvet apparently, shaded his face. Whether by accident or design on his part, this hat completed his resemblance to one of the old conquistadores or grandes of Spain painted by Velasquez. For his

visage was swarthy and oval, his eyes large, black, and brilliant, and the lower half of his face was covered by a pointed beard and immense moustache so black and thick and silky that it hardly seemed of natural growth. To Priscilla's eyes he looked as if he had just stepped across the years out of Prescott's living page, and, like so many others of her sex, in that moment she gave him her whole heart, offered herself up to the husk of a man, unknowing and uncaring what it contained.

Her mind in a confused whirl of thought, she stood as if petrified until the travellers reached her, and made no sign, even when Jake said, 'Thishyer's my sister Priscilla, Cap'n. Pris, Cap'n Da Silva.' The Captain bowed, gracefully enough because naturally, but with evident signs that the movement was unusual, and held out his small and well-shaped brown hand to meet Priscilla's white and plump one. The contact of their hands acted upon her like a vigorous restorative, and the blood fled back again from her face and neck, leaving them for the moment unnaturally pale as she found her voice and bade the stranger welcome. Even Jake's dull eyes could not fail to see how powerfully his sister was impressed by the Captain, and it pleased him well. Selfish and grasping, he was by no means sorry to get rid of his sister, nor did the thought of his mother's loneliness affect him in the slightest degree. So that it was with a chuckle of satisfaction he turned away to put up his horse and buggy, saying carelessly as he did so, "'Scuse me, Cap. My sister 'll look after you in shape, won't ye, Pris?'

Thenceforward Priscilla and the Captain were

constant companions, their intimacy tacitly encouraged by Jake, who was in a high state of satisfaction at the prospect of getting rid of his sister finally. The mother made many attempts to gain her daughter's confidence, for she felt an innate distrust of the handsome stranger. But Priscilla, forgetting all her mother's claims, avoided with intuitive diplomacy any approach to the subject on her part, showing at times an irritability of manner that sorely troubled the old lady, who, having no one to turn to in her distress of mind, was lonely indeed. At last, one day when Pris, the Captain, and Jake had driven off upon some excursion of pleasure, she felt that she could bear the trouble alone no longer, and taking advantage of her younger son's absence at a neighbouring farm, she made a pilgrimage over to the Eddy farmhouse, intent upon pouring out her heart to Mrs. Eddy. The meeting between the two old dames was full of pathetic interest, for Mrs. Eddy loved her boy so fondly that, although she had never felt drawn to Priscilla, it was enough for her that Rube loved the girl. His happiness was the consideration that overtopped all others in her heart. So that when Mrs. Fish unburdened herself, her hearer was torn by maternal solicitude for her boy, and for the time her anxiety as to the effect this news would have upon him was too great to allow her to reply. And when she did speak, her words sounded hollow and unmeaning—so much so that her visitor stared at her wonderingly. For Mrs. Eddy's powers of consolation and wisdom of counsel were matters of common knowledge over a wide extent of country—she was looked up to as infallible. The look in her visitor's

eyes recalled her to herself somewhat, and choking down her feelings by a great effort, she said :

' Wall, Hepziber, yewrs 's surely a hard case, 'n' I kain't fur th' life of me see wut yew're to do. Ef Pris is 'tarmined tu go her own way 'n' wun't listen to yew on the matter 't all, 'n' ef, 's yew say, Jake's doin' his best t' encourage her, yew're jest brought face to face with th' wall, 's yew may say. My Rube w'd hev made her a good husband, an' one 'bout whose record there couldn't be any doubt ; but I've seen fur a long time that she wuz jest puttin' up with him like—she didn't love him more 'n she did me, 'n' you know she never took ter me, ner dad eyther. Go home 'n' pray about it, Hepziber ; it's all we kin do. As fur myself, I've got ter wrassle with th' Lord for my boy, fur how he'll b'ar this I kain't begin ter think.'

And with this cold comfort (to her), Widow Fish had to depart for the home she was beginning to feel a stranger in, after all these years, leaving Mrs. Eddy with a heart overflowing with sorrowful love for her only son. With a natural dread of the effect the news would have upon him, she put in practice all the simple arts she knew to keep him in ignorance of what was brewing, and finally succeeded, by the aid of her husband, in despatching him to Boston on business without his calling at the Fish place first. He was absent from home for a fortnight, and when he returned, after an hour or two spent with his father and mother, he rose and said, with a transparent attempt to conceal his eagerness :

' I guess I'll jest stroll over an' see Pris. I'd like to tell her 'bout some o' the Boston sights. 'N' I've brought her a cunning little watch for a birthday present.'

The mother looked appealingly at her husband, who, answering her gaze with eyes full of fondness, rose, and laying his hand upon Rube's shoulder, said:

‘My son, yew're a man in years an' strength, 'n' I've brung ye up to be the *good* man I b'lieve y' are. Y' haven't hed enny big trouble yet, but y' know ther' ain't nothin' in th' world yew kin 'pend on till it's tested. Yew're goin' ter be tested now. Priscilla's married.’

The watch dropped from the young man's fingers on to the stone floor and was broken. Except for that sound there was absolute silence: none of the three seemed to breathe. Presently Rube spoke:

‘Thank ye, father, fur tellin' me plain 'n' prompt. Now I think I'll go upstairs 'n' rest.’

And with heavy uncertain steps Rube left the kitchen, mounted to the little room he had occupied since he was a child, and shut himself in.

It was true. With a haste that was explained by the Captain as absolutely necessary on account of his ship being ordered to sea at a very short notice, he had pressed his suit when once he found how willing Priscilla was to take him at his own valuation. Mrs. Fish, thoroughly bewildered by the whole hasty proceeding, wandered about the house like an unquiet ghost, doing nothing either to help or hinder the preparations. Jake was unwontedly lavish with the funds necessary, and indefatigable in giving assistance, so that two days before Rube returned from Boston the newly married pair had departed for New Bedford with the intention of spending their honeymoon on board Captain Da Silva's ship as she journeyed southward on the commencement of her long voyage. She was called the *Grampus*, and was one of the fine

fleet of South Sea whaleships then sailing from New Bedford, although so ignorant were the farm-folk of Vermont of maritime matters that even Jake, smart as he fancied himself, had but the dimmest, vaguest idea of what the life was that his sister was going to be shut up to for the next three or four years. Still less did he care. As for Priscilla, she would have accepted unquestioningly any situation into which she might be brought so long as she was by the side of the man she worshipped with a fierce unreasoning intensity. Of Rube she never thought for more than a minute at a time, and then it was only with a sense of relief at the knowledge that he would trouble her no more. From her mother she parted without regret: there seemed to be no room in her mind for anything else but intense satisfaction in the prize she believed herself to have won. Even the prospect of seeing the great world which had once claimed all her desires was but a feeble unit now in the vast sum of her delight in the possession of Ramon Da Silva. Nor was her joy in the least damped by the masterful way in which he accepted all the affection she lavished upon him. To do him justice, he was hardly to blame for this. His career, from the time he had enlisted as a green hand on board of an American whaler at Fayal, in his sixteenth year, had been one long series of successes, due to the great force of his character, his utter unscrupulousness, and entire absence of fear. Step by step he had risen in his dangerous profession until he had become master of a whaleship, while his name was a household word among the fleet for smartness, courage, and—brutality.

## CHAPTER III

### A SUDDEN RESOLVE

WHEN Rube came down the next morning and composedly met his father's and mother's anxious looks, he had the listless air of a man whose spirit had been broken. There was a droop in his shoulders, a dulness in his eyes that contrasted painfully with the bright alertness of his glance and carriage of the day before. But he said nothing of his blow, and his parents wisely forbore to say anything either, trusting that his young and healthy body would come to the assistance of his mind, and that the wound would soon skin over. Unfortunately for their hopes, his love had been the pivot of his life. While a good farmer, a good son, and a good business man, he had no hobbies, he read little, and, being much alone, he had allowed his passion for Priscilla to become so interwoven with his every thought and action that the knowledge of her loss had been like a rending of soul from body. So he went about his duties like a somnambulist, seeking no comfort, making no confidences, and apparently as insensible to externals as a hypnotised man would be.

In this dull round of daily tasks several weeks passed away, until it happened that he found himself at the village grocery on some trivial errand.

There was the usual knot of loungers ready to talk, and absurdly grateful for the coming of any stranger with something fresh to say. As he passed through them with a brief nod of recognition to one and another, and entered the store, he saw standing erect in their midst a tall wiry-looking man, whose face was unfamiliar to him. Pausing for an instant, with the first symptom of interest he had manifested for many days, he heard the stranger say :

'Yas, 'n' if enny ov yew fellers hed th' grit ov a chipmunk, yew wouldn't take twicet t' think over yer anser. Wut man'd go on grindin' mud all his life in a dead-'n'-alive God-fergotten corner like this when he's got 'n' opportoonity of seein' the world—all th' world, mind ye, east, west, north, and south—an' makin' a small forchin 's well? I dunno wuts come over the yewth ov America to-day. Sims t' me they've lost their old vim 'n' push altogether. Well, s' long, boys ; if I kain't persuade ye I kain't, 'n' there's an eend on 't, 'n' I mus' be gittin' long. But ef enny ov ye wants time t' make up yer minds, I sh'l be back this way ag'in ter-morrer ev'nin', 'n' that'll be the las' chance you'll git, enny ov ye.'

Although he had not heard any of the stranger's preliminary discourse, and shrank from making inquiries, Rube's interest was aroused to the highest pitch. He returned to his home with the few words he had heard seething and bubbling in his mind. For he felt that at last here was a way of escape from the almost insupportable deadness of his life. He could not realise that 'the mind is its own place,' and so, like a caged animal, seeing a door of hope open to him, he felt an unconquerable longing to flee.

He said not a word throughout the evening meal, but that was so much his habit now that it passed unnoticed. Mechanically he bowed his head at 'worship,' but his father's reading of a chapter from the Bible might have been in the original Hebrew for all he understood of it. After gaining the solitude of his room, he sat on the bed, his head on his hands, trying hard to reduce the whirlpool of his thoughts to some definite shape until far into the night, but in vain. Only one idea seemed to stand out sharply and distinctly against the misty tumult: he must go. At last, wearied with mental conflict, he fell backward, dressed as he was, and went to sleep.

He rose unrefreshed, with a racking headache for the first time in his life, and went about his usual round of duties automatically. But his face bore such evident traces of his last night's conflict that they could not escape his mother's keen eye. She anxiously inquired after his health, but was met with the careless reply that he was 'all right.' She knew better, of course, but it had never been her way to force confidence, and so she manifested no more curiosity. She only looked wistfully at her boy when unobserved by him, and hovered about him as if more than ordinarily solicitous for his comfort. All day long he moved and looked like a man in a dream, every thought, every feeling merged in one idea—escape. Strange, that it never occurred to him how impossible it is for a man to flee from himself.

Without waiting for supper, and as if dreading to be questioned, no sooner was the day's work done than he strode off to the village grocery, assuming, as he approached it, a most elaborate air of unconcern,

and lounging into the midst of the little knot of listless men hanging about the door as if nothing mattered—an attitude common to all of them. He had not long to wait. In about ten minutes after his arrival a brisk footfall was heard, and turning the corner sharply the lean, keen-looking stranger of the previous evening strode into the midst of the group.

'Evenin', boys,' he jerked out, diving into the pockets of his pants at the same time and producing a formidable plug of hard tobacco and a knife. Having provided himself with a fresh cud and passed on the materials to his next neighbour, he proceeded :

'Wall, boys, hev ye made up yer minds yet? This, as the paestor sez, is the last time ov askin'. Ye've got ter speak up now, 'relse stay right whar y' are f'rever 'n' ever. 'N' that, I sh'd say, 'd be 'nough t' decide fr'anny young *man*. Veg'tables don' count anyhaow.'

This short harangue ended, he looked slyly at his hearers to see whether he had made any impression upon them, but with the exception of a vacant half laugh or two, accompanied by an uneasy shuffle on the part of the utterers thereof, they might as well all have been deaf for any notice they took of him. But suddenly, to his astonishment (although he was careful not to show it), Rube, who was a stranger to him, stepped forward and said :

'Wall, stranger, I guess I'll hitch hosses with ye. When d' ye start, an' what's th' 'rangements?'

'Right, my boy, I'm real proud of ye. I'm startin' this evenin' as ever is; 'n' as t' 'rangements, ye've only got ter sign thishyer paper agreein' t' join

any ship I s'lect f'r ye, 'n' take a little keepsake from me in the shape of two-an'-a-haef dollars. Then ye'll pack up yer traps, 'n' I'll see ye booked through to Noo Bedford. Yew'll start first thing in the mornin'.'

Hardly looking at the form of agreement, Rube signed, the stranger being provided with pen and ink, and dropping the money loosely into his pocket, he strode off homewards, leaving the loungers all agape at the idea of Rube Eddy, who was well known to be one of the steadiest and most comfortably established young men in the county, going off at a minute's notice to foreign lands. Long and earnest was the discussion that followed, all sorts of possible and impossible reasons for the step Rube had taken being brought forward. The stranger lolled at his ease, listening in the hope that Rube's example might prove contagious, but, to his disappointment, it seemed to have quite a contrary effect. The talkers were like men who had just witnessed one of their number take a plunge into the fathomless abyss, from the brink of which they all drew back with horror. This state of mind soon became evident to the stranger, who, jerking himself to his feet, shook himself, stretched, yawned, and finally said :

' Wall, boys, kain't linger with ye always. I'm beginnin' t' feel like Rip Van Winkle meself in thishyer slumbersom place. I reckon I shall hev to hurry back to civilisation agen before I go to sleep too. How on airth yew fellers keep 'wake long 'nough t' eat 'n drink I d'no.'

With this parting shot he turned on his heel and disappeared into the gathering darkness, and they saw him no more.

Meanwhile Rube, his mind a blank, reached home and, hastily ascending to his room, busied himself gathering together his clothing. Good serviceable homespun, most of it, such as would be fit for any work, however rough, that might fall to his lot. Having made it into a compact bundle, with a celerity that raised a dim wonder even in himself, he drew himself up, as if bracing all his fortitude to meet father and mother. Memories of the quiet, pleasant years began to crowd in upon him, but with a gesture as if to crush them back, he deliberately walked down the narrow stairway, whose every step seemed to utter a reproachful creak. Entering the kitchen, he crossed over to the fireside, where his parents sat facing each other and calmly talking over some trivial happening of the day. Standing before them, he waited a moment, while they both looked up at him, and in that one swift glance his mother knew that a crisis had arrived. In a husky voice, that sounded as if it belonged to someone else, he said :

‘Mother, Dad, I’m goin’ away termorrer mornin’. Fergive me fer leavin’ ye like this, but I jest had ter go. I’m no good here any more. I’m goin’ t’ sea, ‘n’ when I come back mebbe I’ll be a stronger man. Naow I’m a wuthless, dreamy shote, ‘n’ I feel ‘s if thishyer quiet easy life ‘d certainly drive me mad befo’ very long.’

‘*Must* you go to-morrow, my son?’ murmured his mother hopelessly, for she knew the breed, knew that once set upon a thing the Eddys were immovable, and yet she felt obliged to make an effort.

‘Yes, mother. ‘Greement’s signed, th’ airnest

money's in my pocket, an' my duds are all packed.  
I'm goin', sure.'

'Rube,' said his father, 'we've been mighty cluss friends all our lives, an' we ain't goin' ter fall eout naow, I'm dead shore o' that. But ye mout ha' told me wut ye wuz meditatin'. 'T wan't far t' me, boy, naow wuz it?'

For all answer Rube reached for his father's hand and held it tight, while the working of his face showed how hard the simple words had hit him.

The father broke the silence again by saying, 'Let us pray.' With a sudden return to his childhood Rube knelt at his mother's knee, while the old man, as had been his nightly wont ever since he first brought home his young bride, but with an added solemnity born of the shadow of his first bereavement, spoke to his Friend :

'Father, eour hearts air troubled. Yew've brought us along a pleasant road right inter the green valley of comfortable old age. We've hed a happy time together, 'n' this our son hez alwus ben a delight to us. We looked that he sh'd still be so, that he sh'd close eour eyes when we laid us down at last t' sleep. P'raps we hev been selfish, 'n' need a lesson to teach us wut it means to spare an only son. He's goin' away from us f'r a long time—where, he doesn't know himself; but however fur he goes, don't let him get away from you. We don't ask you t' spare him t' us ef it's necessary we sh'd never see him alive any more; but ef it *might* be, Father, you know how 'tis yourself, 'n' therefore you know what it'll mean t' us t' have him back again. Make him through all he'll have t' bear such a man as yew'd love to have him,

'n supply his place at home, if it ken be supplied, by a truer sense of yew're presence with us. Bless my son, O Father, and bless us, f'r *yewr* Son's sake. Amen.'

Little more was said, although they sat hand in hand far into the night. Rube wanted nothing that his father could give him, having sufficient money for all his prospective needs ; but he accepted his mother's Bible gratefully, feeling that it would be a palpable link with her. At last they went to bed, where Rube, not from callousness, but from sheer overstrain of mind, slept soundly. His mother lay all through the hours silently praying, while the unhindered tears trickled slowly and continuously down. And his father watched with her.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEPARTURE

MORNING broke over the Eddy homestead grey and cheerless, a fitting reflection of the frame of mind holding sway over its inmates. Rube came down with his grip-sack in his hand, his best clothes donned, and an air of stern resolve on his strong features. He found his father and mother awaiting him in the humble room where he had met them ever since his mind first awakened to the knowledge of worldly matters. For a few moments after the 'good mornings' were said, no word further passed the lips of the three. Suddenly the mother spoke, saying :

'Rube, my son, you never told us *whar* you were goin'.'

To some of us perhaps it may seem strange that neither father nor mother had asked this question before, but the fact is that in their secluded lives the mere idea of one of them leaving home for so long was sufficiently terrible, without any definition of the precise locality to which the wanderer might be directing his steps being thought of. But the mother's heart was already in prospect reaching out after the absent one, and therefore it was but fitting and natural that she should be the first to desire to

know whither he was going. Rube flushed a deep red as the necessary vagueness of his reply dawned upon him, but he said :

' I'm goin' ter sea, mother ; that's all I know at present. When I git t' Noo Bedford an' find out whar' I kin git letters or write frum, be sure I'll let you know to onct. I'm drefful sorry I kain't tell you anythin' more 'n that.'

The morning meal, ample and palatable as it always is on these Eastern farms, was spread, and the three took their places at the board ; but although they made a brave show of eating, the food would not be got rid of, and suddenly Rube arose, as if the sight of his father's worn face and his mother's eyes, bleared with weeping through the long night, was too much for him, saying as he did so :

' Wall, it's time I wuz off. Good-bye, mother ; good-bye, father. I know yewr prayers 'll hover roun' me wharever I go ; and ez soon ez I hev worn out this drefful restless feelin' I'll come back and settle down, please God, never to go away any more.'

A silent kiss from the mother, a grave handshake from the father, and Rube turned his back upon home. Nor did he once look behind him as he strode down the road towards where, in the little village, a conveyance was waiting to take him to the station, whence he might reach New Bedford by railroad. He did not look back because he feared to see his mother's face. Not that his resolve to go would have been thereby weakened, but that he could not help feeling guilty in that he was weakly fleeing from what he could not help knowing was his duty—weakly giving way to what he could not help knowing was

after all, cowardice. But who shall dare to judge the action of his fellow-men under abnormal conditions? 'Put yourself in his place' is a good motto, but how very rarely is it possible for us to act it out! Therefore, although many of us may very well feel inclined to judge Rube harshly for thus deserting father and mother and a life of usefulness, and becoming a wanderer on the face of the deep simply because the woman of his choice could not be his, let us not forget that ever since the world began, and men and women have been able to recount their experiences, strange things have been recorded as done by disappointed lovers against their better judgment.

Rube's mind as the train sped him onwards towards the beautiful New England town whence he was to start upon his long sea journeyings was almost a blank. Never given much to a habit of introspection, he was by reason of the shock that he had recently received less able now to devote himself to concentrated thought than ever; and so, had he been asked what he was thinking about during that long railway journey, he would have replied, no doubt with perfect frankness, 'Hardly anything.' I think this experience is not uncommon, even among men and women given to meditation, when suddenly they have received a mental blow. Be that as it may—and I will own that it is a debatable point—when Rube arrived at New Bedford he had just the air of stolid bewilderment that is generally noticeable upon the faces of country-bred people first coming in contact with the strangeness of life in a seaport town. And truly one might have sailed the wide world round and not have found a more wonderful seaport

than New Bedford was in those days. Men of almost every nation under heaven, clad in outlandish garments, jostled each other along the strongly smelling wharves and picturesque streets bordering the bay. New Bedford was then in the height of her prosperity as metropolis of the whaling world. Over six hundred fine ships came and went on their adventurous sea-questings, bringing with them from the uttermost ends of the earth queer-looking denizens of those far-off lands. Kanakas from the multitudinous Isles of the Pacific, Aborigines from Central America, Aleuts from Alaska, Japanese from Nippon, Chinese, Malays, Papuans, and Dyaks from the East Indian Archipelago, Lascars from Hindustan, Arabs from the Persian Gulf, and last, but by far the most numerous of all these wanderers, Portuguese of every hue, from deepest black to creamy white, from the Fortunate Isles. The diversity of peoples was not more wonderful than the quaintness of their costumes, which were, indeed, a chance medley of all the national dresses of the world. Yet in every case a keen observer, and one acquainted with the subject, might have recognised evidences of an attempt on the part of the wearer to give to his nondescript raiment some national peculiarity. Not only were the people a wonderful sight, but another sense—that of smell—was overpoweringly arrested on the crowded wharves, where scores of weatherbeaten ships discharged their greasy spoils, the odour from which permeated the entire atmosphere, seizing upon a stranger with almost intoxicating effect. Then the sounds!—the loud cries of the labourers as they toiled to discharge the cargoes from the ships, the

wonderful medley of languages spoken by the strange seafarers slouching along the shore, and, pervading all, the hollow murmur of the sea as it rolled in on the beaches of the beautiful bay under the stress of a strong landward gale.

Amidst these novel sights, sounds, and smells, Rube made his way like a man in a dream towards the place whither he had been directed, not without considerable difficulty, as three out of every four persons of whom he inquired his direction did not understand a word that he said. This, to a man who had never before met with anybody not speaking his own tongue, was really bewildering, and it was not therefore to be wondered at that by the time Rube had found the building he sought, his mental processes, never too acute, were reduced almost to numbness. Inquiring timidly at the door of the building to which he had been directed as the place where he should find Mr. Sawtell, he was answered nonchalantly by an elderly man, whose grey beard was plentifully streaked with tobacco juice, that if he went right in and took the first door on the left he'd find what he sought. Rube meekly obeyed, and entered a large, high-ceilinged room, scantily furnished, with several desks enclosed by a low fence and some benches. Two men sat at the desks looking as unlike the embodiment of our modern ideas of clerks as could well be imagined, for both of them had soft wideawake hats perched on the backs of their heads, both were smoking enormous cigars, and both bore in their countenances the expression of temporarily out-of-work pirates more than that of peaceful quill-drivers. As Rube

approached the nearest desk he was somewhat amazed to see the clerk with his chair tilted back and his feet apparently resting upon the papers before him. He gazed at the strongly-marked lineaments of the official, and that worthy returned his look with interest, presently removing the cigar from his mouth and saying : 'Wal, young feller ; an' wut kin I hev the pleasure ?' Rube stammered out, rather incoherently : 'Mr. Sawtell engaged me th' other day to come down here to jine a ship to go to sea.' 'Oh !' said the clerk, 'Sawtell engaged yer, did he ?' And wut mought be the name of the ship ?' 'I don' know,' replied Reuben, who was fast recovering his equanimity ; 'he jest told me to come right here.' 'That's all right, sonny,' said the clerk. 'Sit down thar an' wait fer him ; he'll be roun' bimeby.'

Reuben sat down as directed, and for nearly two hours had the interest of seeing individuals, something like himself, enter, ask almost the same question, and receive almost the same reply, until the room was fairly full. Then, when Reuben began to think that the whole affair must be a mistake, Sawtell entered. With him there came a man looking more like an Eastern patriarch than a seafarer—a tall, loose-jointed, hook-nosed, grey-bearded man, clad in homespun, a long coat reaching nearly to his feet, and a soft steeple-crowned felt hat upon his head. But quaint as his figure might be, there was no mistaking the keen, eagle-like glance of his eyes as he swept them round on the silent men meekly awaiting the arbiter of their fate. And it was he, the Patriarch, who spoke first. 'Is this the crowd you've gut fur me, Sawtell ?' 'Yes, Cap'n Hampden, an' ez likely a

lookin' lot 's ever I see.' 'H'm, mebbe so, but jest naow I guess there's a consid'ble quantity of plough soil hangin' to 'em. But they *do* seem likely enough, as yer say. However, I gut no time to spare. We're bound out first tide to-morrer, an' if these gentlemen air *quite* disengaged' (waving his hand towards the clerks) 'we'll purceed to business to once.' Then, raising his voice, he addressed the waiting candidates comprehensively, saying: 'Wal, young men, so ye feel inclined to try yewr fortunes upon the ragin' deep, do ye?' Muttered responses went up, of which no man might gather the import, save that they were in the affirmative. 'Right an' good,' said the Patriarch; 'step up here, and hear this *gentleman*' (with a sarcastic inflection upon the last word) 'read out t' ye the conditions of sarvice.'

With an unexpected alacrity one of the clerks sprang to his feet, and, from a somewhat grimy document, read in a high sing-song tone of voice an agreement whereby the said crew covenanted to proceed in the good ship *Xiphias* to any port or ports of the navigable ocean in pursuit of whales, seals, and any other denizens of the deep capable of being made profitable to crew and owners; voyage not to exceed four years. It must be confessed that, slurred over as the last two words were (unintentionally, no doubt), several of the candidates suddenly showed a wistfulness of countenance, as if they had a prospective idea of what those four years might mean, but no word was spoken by any of them. Then, one by one, they stepped up to the desk and signed their names, first being told that they would be entitled to receive a good and sufficient quantity

of cooked provisions, and the 250th lay, in return for their unquestioning obedience at all times to all orders that Captain Hampden and his officers might issue to them. And this important preliminary finished, they were all sternly ordered, as being men now under command, to be down at the ship by six o'clock in the morning at latest.

So the newly engaged crew filed out of the office and stood in a little group on the sidewalk hesitatingly. A few words passed—invitations to drink for the most part—and one or two spoke to Rube ; but he answered them unthinkingly, feeling, indeed, the need for being alone. It was all so new and strange to the country-bred man, and he felt that conversation with anybody would be insupportable. So, with muttered excuses, he left the company, and went for a stroll along the wharves, taking in all the wonders of this strange place with wide-open eyes, but most of his other senses nearly out of action. At last, utterly weary, he turned into a respectable-looking eating-house by the waterside, and called for some food, inquiring of the young woman who brought it whether he might take up his lodging there for the night. She answered 'Yes' with a surprised air, and, apparently unable to overcome her curiosity, put several questions to him, as to whence he came and whither he was going, all of which he answered evasively, conveying the idea that what he wanted was to be left alone in peace with his own thoughts. Quite unaccustomed to such rudeness on the part of her customers, the young woman tossed her head and departed, leaving him to his solitary meal. Nor did she return again until, rapping on the table, he

summoned her and asked to be shown his room. With a scornful look at a man who could be so utterly unresponsive to the offer of polite conversation, she led the way to a very small, barely-furnished chamber, showed him in and left him ; and he, with the same bewildered air that he had worn ever since reaching the town, slowly took off his clothes and got into bed, although it was hardly yet dark. In a few minutes the strain of the past twenty-four hours was relaxed, and he was fast asleep.

## CHAPTER V

### OUTWARD BOUND

RUBE awakened before dawn without being called, but with a momentary feeling of terror lest he should have overslept himself. The sound of a neighbouring church clock striking five reassured him, and hurriedly dressing he made his way downstairs, paid his modest bill to the sleepy landlord, who was peering out into the grey of the early morning, and rapidly passed along the wharves in the direction of the ship which had been pointed out to him the previous afternoon. Arriving alongside, he was surprised to see how little bustle and apparent preparation for seafaring was in evidence. Several men were slouching about the decks, and one energetic individual was bellowing occasional orders in an exceedingly loud voice, but beyond that the vessel might, for all he could see, have been going to stay where she was indefinitely. Presently, however, he noticed a little group coming with swaying steps up the wharf, and soon they were alongside, several of them evidently suffering from their potations of the previous evening. Then the tall patriarchal figure of the Captain appeared, stepped on board, and instantly the ship wakened into life.

All unaware of what was expected of him, Rube stood on deck just where he had first stepped over

the side, his few belongings in his grip-sack lying by him, until a short, thick-set man, with a face like unpolished mahogany, came up to him and said : ' Naow, wut yew doin' here—hain't shipped as passenger, hev ye? Them yewr duds? Get 'em below and be mighty smart abaout it, 'less you want consid'ble trouble.' Mechanically he obeyed the man's actions more than his words, which were, indeed, more than half of them almost unintelligible to him. Going forward in the direction indicated by his interlocutor, and finding his way below, he entered a large apartment wrapped in the densest gloom, and it was not until somebody (who, he could not see) struck a light, that he was able to discern its outlines, to see all around it bunks, some occupied by bundles of clothing and miscellaneous objects, and others by sleeping men. The atmosphere of this dark den was foul in the extreme—so much so, in fact, that he felt choking—and, without losing any time, he pushed his belongings into the nearest corner that presented itself and hastened on deck.

The next hour passed with him like a fevered dream. What he was doing or why he was doing it he knew not at all ; for is there any creature more helpless and ignorant than a grown-up man who, for the first time in his life, takes part in the work of a ship putting out to sea? The very language is unintelligible. Everything is so new, so strange, and when presently to these mysteries is added the curious staggering motion of the ship, the neophyte's plight is a most unhappy one. But it may be doubted whether of all the much-advertised remedies for sea-sickness there are any so effectual as being

kept at work, allowed no respite, no moment to brood over the physical inconveniences that assail the candidate for sea honours. The remedy is a terrible one, it is true, but that it is effectual is equally true, and so Rube found it. But when he was ordered aloft to loose a sail he gazed piteously up the rigging and mentally commended himself to the care of God. For as the ship was just feeling the inroll of the wide sea, and putting on a most disconcerting motion, it appeared to him perfectly impossible that he should be able to get up aloft and down again alive. Added to this was the fact that he had not the remotest conception of what he was intended to do. But a stalwart Portuguese standing near him when the order was given murmured, 'Kem along, Greenie; I shows you haow,' and, gratefully willing, in spite of his wretched bodily condition, he clumsily clambered up the rigging after his mentor, followed by a perfect hurricane of opprobrium from the officer on deck, who felt justly angered at his most reprehensible want of smartness. He gained the foretopsail yard, and then, despite all his earnest endeavours to learn from the Portuguese what he was supposed to do, was so overcome with nausea that he could do nothing but hold on, just hanging there, a limp, swaying body, unconscious of everything around and about him in the utter misery of his inner man.

Perhaps it is as well that we draw a veil over the proceedings of the next few days. To follow a novice like Rube through such an ordeal as he was now undergoing, while it might certainly be interesting, could not fail, if faithfully reported, to be

very distressing to anybody possessing a scintilla of sympathy. Let it, then, suffice to say that on the third morning at daybreak Rube, while sitting between the main stays keeping the look-out, began to realise that an interest in his surroundings was rapidly beginning. Also, for the first time since he had left home, he found himself thinking of how matters might be going on at the farm, and then, as he pictured father and mother coming down to the morning meal and offering up a prayer for the absent one, his heart melted, familiar words of prayer formed upon his lips, he bowed his head and sought the ante-chamber of the King. And, for the first time since he had received the news that had wrought so tremendous a change in his life, he coupled with his prayers the name of Priscilla, that she might be blessed and helped wherever she might be, and that her path in life might be made infinitely smoother for her than she had, innocently enough, made his for him.

While engaged in this sacred reverie he allowed his head to droop upon his hand, and became for the time utterly unconscious of his surroundings.

And so it came to pass that the second mate, whose watch it happened to be at the time, making his periodical prowl round the deck to see that all was in order, peered up at the look-out place and saw, as he thought, the watchman asleep. His next move was to procure a bucket of water, which he launched with accurate aim at Rube's crouching form. Rube started upright, gasping and full of bewilderment at this strange thing that had befallen him. But he was not left long in doubt, for almost immediately came a storm of profanity, interspersed

with grim warnings as to the kind and quantity of evil that would befall him if ever again he went to sleep on his look-out. At the first opportunity Rube essayed to reply, and point out that he was not asleep, not knowing, poor fellow, that no excuses of the kind are ever accepted on board ship. His few stammered words only brought the bucket flying at his head, and being, after all, a sensible young fellow, he took this rough hint to mean that the only possible course for him to pursue, under present conditions at any rate, was to take all that might be tendered to him, making no reply unless ordered.

But the *Xiphias* was not at all a bad ship. We may go farther, and say she was a good ship, because Captain Hampden, stern grey Quaker that he was, discountenanced all ill-usage of the crew that was not, to his mind, absolutely necessary. And as he, being part owner, had provided his crew with a plentiful supply of fairly good food, another great source of misery on board ship was removed from them. But still the life for a time seemed very hard to our hero, and would have been much harder but for his magnificent physique and his splendid patience. Moreover, he now found much comfort and a grand outlet for his long pent-up affections in ministering to the many needs of his hapless shipmates. For they, like himself, were drawn largely from inland dwelling people, and several of them were much more helpless than he. They had come to sea all unwittingly, without the slightest foreknowledge of what awaited them, just as he had, and therefore, of necessity, it would be some considerable time before they could settle down to the stolid endurance which

is absolutely necessary for all those who go down to the sea in sailing ships.

A week elapsed, during which all hands were gradually being shaken down into their several grooves. Every man on board had been allotted his post in the boats or as a shipkeeper against the day of battle with the monarchs of the deep. The various green hands had now some of their greenness mellowed, and were learning, or had learned, to get aloft and do something else beside hold on tightly when they got there. But this was the smallest part—the mere rudiments, as it were—of their education. Sailors on board whaling ships are, of course, required to be fairly smart aloft, fairly smart at the ordinary avocations of a sailor; but the principal object of their life is that they shall be smart boatmen, and herein they differ entirely from any other merchant seafarers whatever. And this was soon made evident to them, for at the first opportunity, the weather being fine enough to admit of boats being lowered with a crew of absolutely incompetent men without danger of those valuable vessels being damaged, all hands, except four retained to handle the ship under the charge of the captain, were sent away to practise boatmanship.

This was a severe trial, and all the green hands suffered much. But even here Rube's patience and muscular development stood him in good stead—saved him, in fact, from the energetic attentions lavishly bestowed by the officer and harpooner of his boat upon the other occupants. It must be confessed that he felt many misgivings upon being so near that great heaving blue surface as he was in the frail whale-

boat. Different (and so much harder) as his life had already been on board the ship from all his previous experiences, it was ease and comfort as compared with this apparent tempting of fortune in a mere cockleshell. However, given sufficient energy on the part of the teachers, a modicum of courage and sufficient docility on the part of the taught, men can speedily accommodate themselves to any alteration in their habits of life, no matter how great it may be, and so, after three days of tremendously hard training, Captain Hampden expressed himself satisfied that his newly-gathered crew of clodhoppers might safely be taken into battle with the great sperm whale, and have a reasonable chance of emerging therefrom victorious. The weather had, mercifully to those new-comers, been fairly fine for the time of year—late autumn—although the wind had hung persistently from the S.E., thus hindering their progress greatly ; but one morning at daybreak, the sky lowering threateningly, they were suddenly attacked by a severe gale from the N.E. Amid the hoarse cries of the officers and the blundering but hearty efforts of the crew, sail was shortened to the two close-reefed topsails and foresail, and the old *Xiphias* fled southward at a great rate for her. Then it was that Reuben, being sent aloft upon some errand of fastening a loose end, was suddenly seized with an attack of giddiness and fell, an inert mass, into the sea. In a wonderfully short space of time the vessel was rounded to and a boat lowered and manned, not by her own crew, but by picked men capable of handling her as she *should* be handled. So smart were their efforts that in less than ten minutes they came up with the helpless form of Rube as he lay

unconscious upon the surface. He was seized and hauled into the boat, brought on board, and immediately subjected to the orthodox operations for restoring life to the apparently drowned. Long and carefully they toiled to bring him back to life, and at last succeeded in doing so, but when he opened his eyes upon the world again all the details of his previous life seemed as if they had been completely obliterated. Dismissed to the forecastle, he groped forward like a man suddenly awakened from a long dream, and to all the inquiries of his shipmates he turned a blank face, an uncomprehending demeanour.

But his grand bodily powers enabled him to return to his duties almost immediately, and from thenceforward, strangely enough, he seemed to assimilate all that was taught him with wonderful ease—in fact, as the hard-bitten officer to whose watch he belonged said : 'Thet big hayseed o' mine seems as if 'e was a born sailorman.' So fast did he learn that his watchmates became absurdly jealous of him—a waste of attention on their part, since of it he took not the slightest notice whatever—seemed, indeed, really incapable of doing so.

Captain Hampden became interested in this peculiar development, and occasionally condescended to ply him with questions as to his previous experience, but all in vain. Nothing could be got out of him, and, baffled, the good old skipper had to content himself by saying to his chief officer : 'Wall, at any rate, we seem tohev gut hold of a mighty good man.' And gradually his quiet perseverance in well doing, the impossibility of making him angry, and the readiness with which he would always help to the utmost of his

power any of his shipmates that were in trouble, won him a high place in the hearts of all on board ; even the Portuguese (never very friendly to men of northern breed) could not withhold from him some uncouth tributes of affection.

And so the ship made her way slowly down to the Line, failing, however, to the disgust of the officers, to raise a whale for the first month after her departure from port. But the time was well spent, for all hands, by dint of incessant practice, were now in a high state of efficiency, only requiring their baptism of fire, if it may be called so—their initiation into the art and mystery of whale-fighting—to make them as good a crew as any whaling skipper could desire to have under his command. All bullying, hazing, and what we should call brutality, had ceased. The ship was quite as peaceful as any 'limejuicer,' and it was easy to see from the contented faces and pleasant remarks of the officers how well satisfied they were with the progress made by the men under their command in the direction of becoming decent sailors.

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## CHAPTER VI

### DISILLUSIONMENT

PERHAPS it is high time that we returned for a while to the career of our heroine in her new sphere. It must be remembered that she, as so many other young women have done, took a leap in the dark, committing herself and her future to the care of a man about whose antecedents and character she knew absolutely nothing, having only in the few short days of their acquaintance seen him at his very best. But such was the glamour with which she had invested her hero that, although she was startled and troubled in mind by his brutal language and still more brutal treatment of the men under his command from the first hour that she came on board his ship, she attributed it all to the necessities of a captain's position. Every oath made her shudder, every blow made her wince, yet she bore it all without remark, as belonging to a new order of things of which she had hitherto been entirely ignorant, and upon the merits of which at present she felt herself quite unable to give an opinion. Perhaps, had she been able to hear the remarks that were passed by the crew to one another when they thought such remarks might safely be made, she would have shuddered still more. But, poor girl, all such warning words

were hidden from her, neither did she know—how could she, indeed?—that her husband bore the unenviable reputation of being the hardest skipper of all the hard-bitten crowd of such men sailing from the whaling ports of North America. Still, even her trustful heart could not fail to be wounded at the incessant cruelty which she was now compelled to witness.

The crew, driven on board at the last moment before sailing like a pack of cowed dogs, were a set of miserable ragamuffins, taken, apparently, because none others could be obtained at any price. There were only two Americans among them—two poor lads from the Western States, who had run away from home to go to sea; the rest were representatives of almost as many races as there were members. This, in itself, made for the safety of the officers—made the brutality much less likely to be resented successfully, because, among that medley of foreigners, there could be no banding together for a common purpose of revenge. Not that such an event was at all probable, because, according to the fixed plan pursued on board the majority of such vessels, the precaution was taken while yet the crew, who were nearly all green hands, were in the throes of nausea and bewilderment at their strange surroundings, to beat them, with or without pretext, until their spirits were thoroughly broken and the possibility of their retaliating was hopelessly remote. Captain Da Silva, in spite of the presence of his wife, which might have been expected to have a humanising influence over him, was this voyage more savagely brutal than ever he had been before. His four officers, who knew him

well, and who were all eager followers of his plans (had to be, indeed, in order to keep their position with him), confessed one to another that the old man seemed as if he wanted to show his bride how black a demon he *could* be. *He* said, not by way of excuse, but apparently stating a mournful fact, in conversation with his officers, that in all his fishing he had never had such a crowd to deal with as he had got this time, and before they had been at sea a week he discussed with the officers elaborate plans for running across to the Azores, driving his present crew overboard and shipping a crowd of his fellow-countrymen therefrom. But this was going a little too far, for three of his officers were Americans, and they by no means relished the prospect of having an entire crew of Portuguese on board an American ship. They felt that it would be indeed exchanging the devils they knew for the devils they did *not* know, and, as far as they dared, made this plain to their brutal commander. And he, wise as well as wicked, took the hint, for he could not afford to lose such splendid whalers as his officers had proved themselves to be. So, instead of working to the eastward, they shaped a course for the Line, and met with such good fortune in the shape of weather that, without the parting of a rope-yarn, they found themselves at the end of a fortnight well within the Tropics.

It was one of the characteristics of Da Silva's career that he always seemed to have extraordinary luck. This voyage was no exception, for no sooner was the vessel shipshape, the whaling gear rigged, and all fishing preparations made, than he, taking the masthead trip one morning, sighted a grand

school of sperm whales. Instantly his voice rang throughout the ship, calling all hands to action, and even those unhappy men who had had the hardest experience of his cruelty could not withhold a tribute of admiration for his wonderful powers of command, presence of mind, and exact knowledge of how to do the right thing at the right moment.

That scratch crew of wastrels, broken-spirited as they were, seemed to catch a spark of his enthusiasm, and exerted themselves in extraordinary ways in order to gain his approval.

Priscilla, utterly neglected amid this hurly-burly, sat perched on the taffrail looking with wide-eyed wonderment upon the busy scene. A thrill of terror seized her as she saw her husband, standing erect in the stern of the first boat lowered, urging his crew, with an unbroken stream of profanity, to the highest efforts of which they were capable. She could see the whales, but she hardly knew what was afoot. All that was real to her was that the ship was deserted by almost all hands, including the commander, only three or four being left to handle the sails. So there she sat solitary, alarmed, full of fears for her husband's safety, for the result of this tremendous manœuvre, the object of which she only dimly understood. The cries from the two men at the masthead to those on deck she understood not at all, nor did she dare to ask the helmsman for any information for fear that her innocent inquiry might reach her husband's ears later and be fiercely resented by him. But he had obtained such a hold over her that even now she did not blame him : she only felt sorry that he should not have had time (as she put

it to herself) to acquaint her with the reason for his hurried departure.

Meanwhile the five boats, their crews straining at the oars to the utmost limit of their strength, sped away at right angles to the direction in which the whales lay. The Captain kept the lead, not that the men in the other boats were not doing their best, but that he had a picked crew, and that every man of them was working as if in imminent bodily fear of some terrible punishment unless he exerted all his muscular power. The oars rose and fell with the regularity of steam pistons, the water foamed past the boats, but no other sound was heard save the laboured panting of the men and the low, hissing execrations of the Captain. It is popularly supposed that when rowing boats after whales there is a great deal of shouted encouragement, either kindly or the reverse, that the men themselves are apt to break into song, as Dr. Beale permits himself to say, 'The men sang the time-honoured whaling chant of "Away, my boys, away, my boys, it's time for us to go,"' but when it is remembered how very slight a sound, even at the distance of miles, will suffice to alarm the valuable quarry, it will at once be seen that experienced whale hunters would not be likely to do such a foolish thing as to make unnecessary noises, even supposing that they had breath to spare for doing so.

At last, when the rowers felt as if their arms would drop off at the shoulders, the Captain's deep voice was heard saying, 'Peak oars, step mast, up sprit.' These actions were immediately copied by each of the other boats, and, in three minutes from

the time they had ceased rowing, the five boats, under the steady stress of their big sails, were bounding over the bright sea before the wind down on to the whales. The propulsion with the oars had only been resorted to for the purpose of obtaining a good weather gauge. That once reached, and the sails set, the boats' heads were turned at right angles to the course they had been pursuing so that they might now, with the wind almost astern, run down upon the whales at high speed, and with the least possible amount of splash.

It was a splendid sight, that group of unconscious monsters calmly and methodically pursuing their way, quietly attending to their own business of procuring food and enjoying their life ; and here, close at hand, stealing upon them like pirates upon a helpless merchantman, this little flotilla of destroyers. Each officer and harpooner was now in the throes of expectation, every nerve tense, all their hopes high that they would reach their prey before the periodical descent of the whales took place. In nine cases out of ten this would not have been the case, but here again, Captain Da Silva's luck appeared to be in the ascendant, for, as if the boats were living creatures, full of eager desire to come to close quarters with the enemy, they leaped forward with ever-accelerating speed, until the foremost whale, a large bull of about seventy barrels (or, say, sixty feet in length) was only a couple of lengths ahead of the skipper's boat. Hoarsely he growled, 'Stand up, Jose !' The harpooner's crouching form straightened itself, and, raising the harpoon in both hands while steadyng himself by his left thigh in the hollow of the clumsy



THE WHALE WENT STEADILY DOWN, DOWN, DOWN.



cleat, he waited, a heroic figure, until, by a skilful sweep of the steering oar, the boat swung end on to the whale's broad side, and struck it, at the same moment as the harpoon flew from those nervous hands and buried itself in the quivering blubber up to the hitches. Calmly pitching the stray line out of the box over the boat's side, the harpooner turned to go aft with the face of a man knowing that his duty had been well done. Without taking the slightest notice of the writhings of the tortured leviathan so near or the tremendous commotion in the water, he superintended the rolling up of the sail, the unshipping of the mast, and the passing of it aft where it would be out of the way of the operations.

While the crew of the boat were thus engaged the Captain, with that skill for which he was justly famous, had, by means of the big steering oar, manipulated the boat so that she lay at a safe distance from the whale. The hardly-pressed monster, in orthodox fashion, finding that he could not free himself from the galling weapon, descended steadily, taking out line at a gentle rate, while the Captain changed ends with the harpooner, unsheathed his favourite lance, and awaited the return of the whale to the surface. While so doing, his countenance was a study in ferocity. The immediate prospect of blood-shed seemed to arouse in him all the animal, and, as he glared fiercely around upon his crew, they hardly dared meet his eye, so terrible did he look. But he was compelled to forego his delightful occupation for a while, and remain as quiet as it was possible for him to do while the whale went steadily down, down, down. Meanwhile, by a piece of amazing good

fortune, each of the other boats had succeeded in getting fast to a whale without any accident, and now they were all engaged in the same manner as the Captain's boat, waiting, with such patience as the officers could command, for the rising to the surface of their respective whales. The remainder of the school, having apparently lost all control of themselves, wandered aimlessly around the little company of boats, going slowly backwards and forwards, thrusting their great heads out of the water without apparently the slightest idea of what to do or where to go, and arousing in the minds of the officers, especially in that of the Captain, the fiercest resentment at their inability to take more advantage of so splendid an opportunity as was now offered them. After a wait of nearly half an hour, all the harpooned whales came to the surface at nearly the same moment, and immediately the scene underwent a change as complete as it is possible to imagine. The wounded monsters, rushing frantically in every direction in their vain efforts to escape, the fierce guttural yells of the officers as they plied their slender, gleaming lances upon those vast bodies, the welling fountains of blood that befouled the bright sea surface, all went to make up a picture of savagery which could hardly be equalled by that presented in any land battle. So successful was the conduct of this first encounter that hardly two hours had elapsed since the boats first left the ship when the whole five whales were dead, the boats cleared up, and all was in readiness for the prey to be taken alongside the ship. She, being well and smartly handled by the three or four people left on board, and having got well

to windward of the area of battle, now ran down to where the Captain's boat lay by the side of his dead whale. Having made the line fast to a hole in the whale's fluke, he ordered his boat to run alongside the ship, and, climbing smartly on board, he superintended the hauling of the whale alongside. Now, the ship being hampered by that gigantic body made fast to her, it became necessary for the crews of the other boats to tow their whales as best they could in the direction of the vessel. Fearfully long and tedious was the process, and the impatience of the Captain rose to a height of almost maniacal fury, although he knew full well that every man was doing his utmost to perform the tremendous task allotted to him. Without a break they toiled until the sun was nearly setting, nor was one moment's respite allowed them until the whole of the day's catch was secured alongside and astern of the ship. Then, and not till then, the Captain shouted with a grudging note in his voice, 'Mr. Court, send the hands to dinner.' The order was repeated by the mate, and the men wearily dragged themselves below, where the food—cooked long ago—was awaiting them. But as they went the Captain shouted again, 'Look lively now; yew wanter be on deck again in twenty minutes.' Having delivered himself thus, he turned towards his cabin, where, for the first time that day, he greeted his wife. She, quite bewildered by the day's proceedings, summoned up all her affection, and came to greet him with arms outspread, but he, glowering fiercely at her, said, 'I got no time for fooling now; I got something else to think about.'

This rebuff reduced her to a pitiable state of mind,

for it was utterly incomprehensible. That she had done anything to deserve it she could not feel, and, indeed, it was a strange thing that a man in the height of his success, having inaugurated his cruise in so splendid a fashion, with enormous profits lying only waiting to be realised, should be so hatefully morose and savage in his demeanour.

It was a puzzle beyond hope of solution. The meal was taken in utter silence, the food being bolted in truly animal fashion ; and, while yet the last mouthfuls were being masticated, the skipper rose abruptly from his seat and said, 'Now, then, Mr. Court, start the hands again.' While they had been at dinner the shipkeepers had completed their task of getting the gear ready for cutting in, so that when the officers came on deck and summoned the hands it only remained to commence cutting in the whales at once. Loud orders resounded along the decks, but, for perhaps half a minute, there was no response, and this seemed to act upon the Captain maddeningly. Snatching a belaying-pin from the rail, he strode forward muttering curses, and, beating his weapon upon the scuttle hatch of the forecastle, he roared down into the gloomy cavern, 'D' ye want to be smoked out like a nest of hornets ?' Full of alarms, the weary men clambered up the steep ladder, but as the first one reached the deck he was met by a tremendous blow full in the face, which sent him reeling to the deck.

It must be admitted that captain and officers worked hardest of all ; in fact, they seemed like men of steel rather than of flesh and blood, and even the weary seamen could hardly refuse a tribute of admira-

tion to the way in which they were led. By midnight, under the glare of blazing cressets suspended from the davit heads, they had managed to cut in two of the whales, and had decapitated the remaining three, the great columnar heads being strung astern by hawsers. Then the Captain reluctantly gave orders that half the crew should retire for an hour while the other half busied themselves in making some sort of a clearance on the deck, which was now piled almost from end to end with blubber, and ankle-deep in oil. How speedily that hour passed for the privileged ones only they could tell. Indeed, it seemed but a moment before they were back at work again, and the other half were sent for the same brief period to rest. But the savage brute of a captain took no rest. He seemed superhuman, and when day dawned the whole of the spoil had been taken on board, with the exception of the three heads, for which no room could be found at present.

## CHAPTER VII

### A STRICKEN DEMON

IT has been a frequent matter of remark, not merely by myself, but by all the writers with whom I have conversed who have ever interviewed old sailors on the subject of their experiences, how difficult it is for the latter to tell what they have seen. Their memories are most keen, but the mighty happenings they have witnessed seem to overwhelm their simple vocabulary, and they will suddenly break off in the midst of a splendid tale, and, holding up their hands in a gesture of despair, cry out, 'Oh, God, if I *could* only tell ye what I've seen!' I am led to think that perhaps it is this felt inability to do justice to the memory of what they have really seen that has often made sailors possessed of vivid imaginations invent magnificent lies, rushing by some curious mental paradox into the opposite extreme, from the sober recital of fact to an absurdly extravagant invention of fiction.

But be that as it may, there can be no doubt that even those who have been most successful in the attempt to transport their readers to the scenes which they themselves have witnessed, are often touched by the same feeling of inability, as the grandeur of the scenes they would fain depict flashes through their minds. They sit with poised pen—present, indeed, as

to the body at their desks, but in spirit, by some unexplainable mystery, away back amid the surroundings of those former years, going through it all again. And thus they sit waiting, waiting, prisoners of hope, until relief comes in some commonplace word or thought, and the pen is re-started, to run perchance glibly enough until again arrested in like manner.

These reflections irresistibly arise as I recall similar scenes to the one which I would now describe: that splendid silken circle of sea and dome of sky just commencing to palpitate with the glories of the new day; those low, tender ranges of softest cloud like carelessly piled heaps of snowy down, with sober grey bases almost parallel with the horizon, and summits blushing sweetly with all the warm tints of the coming sun; through the eternal concave overhead running tremulous sprays of liveliest colour throbbing and changing incessantly on their background of deep violet, from which the modest stars are quietly fading before the advent of morning. Across the mirror-like surface of the ocean great splashes of colour come and go in never-ending progression, although there be never a cloud from which they may be reflected and their pure hues come direct from the impalpable ether around. And in the centre of it all, grating at first upon the mind as the only discordant note in the harmony otherwise reigning, is a ship surrounded by the greasy, mutilated carcasses of her spoil—that spoil which was so recently fulfilling the exhortation of that glorious hymn, ‘O ye whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever.’ What

a hideous scene of squalor it does appear, to be sure ! Great shapeless masses of flesh and fat and bone, huge clots of black blood, an undefinable odour of death—for the time has not yet come for corruption to defile air as well as sea—and in the midst of it all, fiercely toiling, hacking, thrusting, tearing, yelling, blaspheming, are the slayers. From every pore the ship exudes oil warm from the body, at every roll a new extent of 'sleeky' water is thrust out from her slimy sides. Gradually, as the space in her main-hold known as the blubber-room becomes filled up, the limited area on deck is piled with the masses of blubber, and the oil which exudes from them fills up the carefully caulked decks and at each wallowing roll she makes rises against the bulwarks, which are almost as impervious as the deck itself. So inside, outside, half-way up the mainmast, she reeks with blood and grease, while the water all around is a seething mass of silent voracity. From who knows how far away the hungry denizens of the deep sea have hastened to the feast, summoned by some unerring sense, of which we know nothing at all. No one, as far as I know, has ever attempted to compute the number of the host of sharks alone which surround a whaleship while she secures her spoil ; so I shall not try. It would be only a wild guess, after all, for they come and go incessantly in utmost haste, and as far as the eye can see the water is aboil with their strugglings to secure at least some portion of the great feast.

Of the other deep-sea citizens present I can say little. They are to be seen of course, but only occasionally, for this feast is peculiarly the shark's

great opportunity, and it is no easy matter for any other fish to displace him. In the air, the hungry self-invited guests may be few or many, according to the position of the ship. In the North Atlantic birds are far less plentiful than they are in the South, for some reason which I have never been able to find out, and consequently in this great scene of spoliation which I am now attempting to limn there were only about a dozen or twenty 'gulls.'

During its progress, as during the hunting, Priscilla sat on the top of the after-house motionless under the influence of some horrible fascination which she could not resist. She watched the lithe form of her saturnine husband as, leaning over the rail of the cutting-stage, he dealt blow after blow at the black and white masses beneath him, or occasionally varied his labours by a sidelong thrust which severed some thieving shark's head from its body. But she noted that while he appeared to be doing more than any other member of the crew, his physical efforts never interfered with his mental energies in the oversight of his men. He seemed to know where every man was, and what he was, or ought to be, doing. An incessant stream of orders, threats, and cursings poured from his throat, which was apparently of brass, since it never got hoarse. The only physical sign of his vocal labours was the foam with which his raven-black beard was flecked.

Utterly brutal, utterly callous and heartless as she now knew her husband to be, she could not withhold from him a silent tribute of admiration for his powers of command and organisation, and for his courage. She felt shuddering pity for the poor men,

who, against the most urgent calls of Nature to rest their tortured limbs, went fiercely toiling on as if only by that means could they avert sudden, violent death. Once or twice she gave vent to a low moan of compassion as she saw the Captain leap inboard with a tiger-like spring and fall upon some man whom his eagle eye had detected lagging behind the others, assailing him with the utmost ferocity by knocking him down, jumping on him, kicking him as if determined to do him to death. Again and again she turned to go, overcome by the horror of these constantly recurring scenes, but she could not: she was compelled to remain and witness them while powerless to help and unable even to pray that God would have mercy upon these poor wretches upon whom man—at least her man—had none.

What man has done, man can and will do unless restrained by powerful laws, and what was done amid such scenes as I am recalling was gentleness itself when compared with what went on aboard the galleys of ancient days—scenes which no modern writer has dared, or would dare, to put comprehensively into print. For even on board a whaler, where one man embodied all the law or justice obtainable by anybody, the blessed influences of Christianity in the modifying of cruelty were felt, and things were thus not nearly as bad as they might have been; nay, they were only in exceptional cases as bad as I have represented. This fact, I think, deserves special emphasis, because it goes to show that the majority of men in command of these ships, knowing full well that they were never likely to be called to account for any cruelties they might commit in the name

of discipline, yet abstained from exercising their autocratic power, or only used it when it became undoubtedly necessary that they should do so.

Gradually the mighty task drew to its close. One by one the vast carcasses were cut adrift and floated away, each the centre of a writhing mass of hungry creatures fiercely fighting for places at the feast, which, great as it was, seemed but a trifle compared with the host of candidates for it. One by one the huge square 'cases' were hove up alongside and their bland contents ladled out into the tanks below. But when the last but one was being emptied, as it hung, a weight of some twenty tons, suspended from the cutting-in falls, Captain Da Silva went to the waist, and, leaning up against the case, looked down to see whether or not the precious spermaceti was draining away from some cut in its walls, as he suspected it was. As he did so the ship rolled ever so slightly, and without any warning the massive chain slings which held the case aloft tore out. It fell like an avalanche descending, a big flap of 'white horse' or head integument curling round the Captain's body and whirling him after it into the fathomless depths. It was so terribly sudden that Priscilla was momentarily stunned, but with returning breath she uttered a wild cry of terror and fell fainting, her overwrought condition of nerves unable to bear this last great shock. For one moment the crew also stood like statues, but ere one could count five, the third mate and second boat-steerer had leaped into the sea after their commander, although they knew (none better) of the swarming sharks and the many other reasons why they should be unsuccessful.

But all traces of him had vanished, and realising that not only were they most dangerously situated, but that they could see better from above, they climbed on deck again with all the speed they might, reaching it at the same moment as Captain Da Silva's head appeared on the other side above the rail.

For a few moments all who witnessed his rising stared with starting eyes at what they deemed to be his wraith, but his hoarse voice, full of anger, roused them instantly from their brief lethargy. 'Naouw, then, whutye all gapping at, like a lot er —— suckers's y'air. Git along wi' thet work, 'relse I'll be 'mong ye in mighty short order, naouw I'm telling ye.' And each man sprang to his task as does a mettled horse when the lash falls unexpectedly across his flanks. And Captain Da Silva strode off muttering maledictions. Perhaps it was all the formula of thanksgiving which he knew: certainly no word of praise for the miracle of his escape out of the very jaws of death crossed his lips. He had been carried down by that long sliver of skin which had enwrapped him and held him tightly bound to the mighty mass of the case until he felt as if his head were a boiler under a full pressure of steam. But as the 'case' sank, by some mysterious influence it spun round, or rather revolved, for its motion was but slow, and in doing so it unwound the clinging band from the skipper's body. Never having lost his presence of mind, and being as nearly amphibious as the rest of his island countrymen, he sprang upward to the surface, just grazing the bilge on the opposite side of the ship to that from which he had descended, and grasping a bight of the main sheet which dangled invitingly alongside, he

swung himself aboard, ready and alert to resume the tyranny he loved.

The whole affair of his departure and return had been so dramatically sudden that Captain Da Silva was in his cabin shouting for Priscilla to give him dry garments before she had recovered from her swoon. His angry demands brought the trembling steward at his best gait. To his breath-bated inquiry the skipper shouted :

‘ Whar’s Mrs. Da Silva, yew black beast ; whar’s my wife ? ’

‘ Please, sah, de madam’s done gone swounded, an’ I ain’t can fatch ’er to yit. I — ’

But flinging him aside as if he had been a bundle of rags, the skipper rushed on deck to where Priscilla was sitting up wearily passing a hand over her dazed eyes and wondering what strange thing had befallen her. He seized her arm roughly, and in tones of deepest scorn demanded what sort of — game she called this ? Was he to wait in his wet clothes while she lolled about on deck playing the (more unsavoury adjectives) fool ? Mechanically she staggered to her feet, and, like some unreasoning but faithful animal, tottered towards the cabin. I doubt if she would have been surprised had her husband accelerated her progress by a kick, to such a numbness of brain had she come. But she did his bidding, accepted all his blasphemous grumbling, and made no sign. For she was, in the fullest sense of that much-abused brace of words, heart-broken. Her spirit was crushed, never to awake again as it had been ; her love was dead, and only patient, animal-like obedience remained. Did any compunction arise in the man’s mind for what he

had done to that trusting, loving woman? Those who think so little know the capacity of man for cruelty. A grim smile lit up his diabolically handsome features as he noted her quiet performance of his commands, and although he said no word it was easy to see with what fiendish pleasure he realised this new proof of his power to rule others with a rod of iron.

Without pausing to do more than glance at his injuries—one long black and green bruise which wound twice round his body, and another extending from his right thigh to his heel, with the skin broken in many places—he hastily dressed himself in dry clothes and, without casting another glance at the submissive figure of his wife, rushed on deck. Fortunately for all of them, the crew were working hard to secure the masses of junk (solid pieces, each several tons in weight, cut from the whale's head), lashing jaw-bones, clearing away try-works, getting up mincing-machine and tricing up gear out of the way of the all-pervading grease. He cast one comprehensive, scowling glance around, which deepened in its frown when he found no cause of complaint, and at once assumed sole command. For the next hour his orders flew like volleys of musketry, spurring on the almost spent men to give up the last ounce of their strength. And then suddenly, as if God had taken pity on those hapless men, the tyrant's indomitable strength and pluck gave out together, and he sank to the deck moaning feebly, 'Take me below, —— ye, take me below.' Even with what seemed the last breath he needs must curse those upon whom he was now utterly dependent for all his wants.

So, inert, all his great energy vanished, and his wiry limbs hanging limply as loose ropes' ends, he was borne below to his bunk, his appearance in this guise startling Priscilla again, but arousing in her now no such feelings as those with which she had witnessed his disappearance over the rail so short a time before. With quiet dignity she directed the bearers where to lay him, thanked them, and dismissed them. Then, left alone with the man for whom she had given up her life, and more than her own life, had she but known, she went about the duty of attendance upon him methodically, carefully, but with no more feeling than if he had been an utter stranger. All that she could do for him she did, but of affection in her ministrations there was no trace. Presently with a feeling of relief, such as usually accompanies the successful conclusion of a difficult task, she saw him pass from coma to sleep, heard him breathe naturally, and watched the ghastly pallor of his face give place to its healthy olive hue. Then she took some needlework and sat down by his side, ready to attend upon him when he woke, determined to do her very utmost for him dutifully, and hoping to make faithful service take the place of the love she knew she would never feel for him again.

Perhaps I may be pardoned for anticipating criticism here by a word or two. I know well that women can, and do, show love of the deepest, truest, holiest kind for men who not merely speak to them harshly, but beat, starve, or ill-treat them in every way. But Priscilla was not one of these women. It may be, too, that her love for Ramon Da Silva was not love in the best sense of the word, but

merely a hurricane gust of passion that for a season had changed the whole surface of her being, while leaving unruffled the great depths below. I do not know, nor do I care to dogmatise, but of this I am sure—that there are many Priscillas about, worthy of all the love of a good man, and fully capable of returning it, whose love, calmly, thoughtfully given, would be changed into utter dislike and contempt for the once loved one if they should have the misfortune to discover him to be cruel or disgusting. And for one I dare not say that they are therefore in any way worthy of blame, or are not perfectly true and lovable women.

Now ensued a period of calm satisfaction for all hands, tempered only by the knowledge that it would soon come to an end. The exceedingly heavy toil of mincing the blubber, boiling down the oil, storing it in casks, and disposing those casks in easily accessible positions about the decks, went on without intermission, but quietly. Every man worked as if the knowledge of his tyrant's impotence, for a time at any rate, had supplied him with an incentive. But the Captain was suffering utter torment below. Ordinarily he was quite wanting in what we vaguely speak of as nerves: he worried about nothing. Now, however, his great strength entirely gone from him, knowing how large a task was in hand on deck, and knowing, too, how glad was every man on board that he, their despot, was helpless, he raged and fumed, and thereby retarded his recovery greatly. But for those who came in contact with him, this time was a terrible one. His poor wife and the negro steward lived in utter terror of him, although physically he was powerless to do them harm.

Perhaps it may be thought that too severe a description of this man has been given, and that thereby some injustice has been done to men generally. But if so, I would like to ask objectors whether they have never had the misfortune to know anybody, not necessarily a man, who would, given the opportunity have behaved quite as badly as Captain Da Silva. God knows, I have no wish to libel any of my fellow men or women, but I am absolutely certain that but for the grace of God, the sweet influences of Christianity, there are very few of us who can be trusted with absolute power over our fellows. And if any doubt were possible, surely the records of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children would dispel it. The sight of helplessness does in some infernal way seem to generate in many minds an irresistible desire to inflict suffering upon the helpless. And it needs all our faith in God, as well as all our recollection of the tender love that fills so many hearts, to keep us from feeling that mankind in general is possessed by all those attributes which we have agreed to consider as the characteristics of Satan. Of course, like all other qualities, cruelty needs special opportunities for its full development as well as a deliberate cultivation. And for this reason I have never been able to understand why so many otherwise level-headed people should object to corporal punishment for the perpetrators of cruelty, since it is almost invariably the case that cruel people are most tenderly solicitous for the care of their own susceptibilities to pain. Exceptions there are to this rule, of course, and Captain Da Silva was one. No amount of corporal punishment would

have deterred him from being again the merciless monster he was by nature, given fitting opportunity ; for he, as I have already endeavoured to point out, had an almost Chinese disregard of personal suffering. But even he was certainly no worse for the tasting in his own proper person of some of the pains he was wont to bestow lavishly upon others.

Only two persons wished him speedily well, and for obvious reasons. They were his personal attendants. The chief mate, whose business brought him below periodically to report progress, always had to summon up all his courage to face his suffering chief, always returned to upper air again acutely conscious of relief, although he was a man of great ability and resource, and, moreover, had the comforting knowledge that under his (comparatively) mild rule the work was slipping along on greased wheels. But (and this is one of the peculiarly subtle depravities of some natures) he could not help feeling that his commander's irritation at his own helplessness was in no way lessened by the knowledge that affairs were going on quite smoothly without his interference—that, in fact, it would have been in some measure an alleviation of his sufferings could he have known that, bereft of his oversight, matters were at sixes and sevens. And each time the mate came to report, and gave him the bland information that all was going as well as possible, the men were working with a will, the weather continued fine, and the blubber was yielding most richly, the skipper was instant in cross-examination on every detail, apparently in the hope that he might somehow find occasion to vent his long pent-

up spleen upon someone else beside his wife and the negro steward.

Nothing transpired, however, to gratify him, and at the end of the sixth day from his accident the mate reported all oil barrelled and half of it stowed ; that the crew were busy now with lye and sand cleaning up ; that the mastheads were manned, and— But right in the middle of his flow of words came the most thrilling cry of 'Blo-o-o-o-w.' The mate stopped in the middle of a word and looked round listeningly. But his skipper, maddened almost beyond endurance at the knowledge of his own helplessness, and that his subordinates would now have an opportunity of showing their capabilities without any overlordship of his, hurled at the listening mate one long yell of profanity which had the effect of sending the latter scampering rabbit-wise up the tortuous cuddy stairs on deck.

Fortunately for Priscilla, the raging emotions of her husband, conjoined with his bodily weakness, had the effect of rendering him utterly helpless both in mind and body. For a while she busied herself quietly in such necessary attentions as she was able to render, then, hearing as in some realistic dream the weird tumult on deck, and feeling her own utter loneliness, she did that which is, thank God, open to us all, if in varying degrees. She lifted her tired heart to God, remembering with a bitter pang of repentance the many perfunctory repetitions of 'Our Father' she had performed ; a remembrance which brought a host of others in its wake. The quiet times of family worship she had yawned over behind her hand, the glorious words of Holy Writ

passing her then unlistening ears like meaningless jargon, the tender father who had never given her a harsh word during her recollection of him, the faithful, plodding mother, whom she had forsaken at the lightest word of a stranger, and the dog-like devotion of—— But no ; *that* thought must not be encouraged. From her uneasy seat she slid to her knees, and from her overloaded heart poured forth her unspoken prayers—not for deliverance, but for strength, for peace of mind, for knowledge how to do and say the right thing and word at the right time. And as the subtle communications passed between that suffering heart and the Centre of all Solace, the blessed dew of peace descended upon her spirit, and she felt that the victory was won, for the present at any rate.

Meanwhile, though unheeded by her, the uproar on deck had reached its climax, then suddenly ceased, and a profound silence reigned. She sat, listening intently, but in nowise alarmed : she felt past all that. Until presently a comical black head, with wide white eyeballs, protruded from the state-room door. Its glance, fearfully questing, caught hers, and in reply to her whispered inquiry came a murmur : 'Dey 's awl goen away, Mistis ; on'y me an' de cook, carpenter an' cooper an' shipkeepers am lef'. But it looks laik a mighty fine school of spam whales dey 's onter, an' ef dey gets um may be de skipper please, an't it ?'

## CHAPTER VIII

### A DISASTROUS DAY

UNDOUBTEDLY there was a certain fierce delight in Mr. Court's mind, as well as great relief, when he fled precipitately on deck from the presence of the terrible man who was his present commander. As any other man of his abilities and bravery would have done, he felt a certain measure of contempt for himself that he should be so meekly subservient to one whom he believed in his heart of hearts to be no braver or more skilful than he was himself ; but the deeply ingrained habit of discipline prevented that feeling from reaching its logical conclusion. And, unlike the Dago, he, being an Anglo-Saxon, also felt a certain compassion for a man stricken down by accident in the performance of his duty, and utterly unwilling to take the smallest advantage thereof. More, in some dim manner he felt that if his part were well played now, there might be some alleviation in the lot of that pale saint (for in such a light had the mate come to regard Priscilla—you cannot keep family secrets on board a ship) ; and so, fired with all the best ambitions that can energise a man, he sprang on deck, every sense keenly alert.

The air was full of wailing cries of ' Bl-o-o-o-o-w.' All hands were waiting ready by their boats with an

air of expectation, as if each man was taking the highest personal interest in the outcome of the present adventure. The second mate, standing on the little bridge over the wheel conning the ship, no sooner saw his superior than he said, 'School o' th' biggest sparm whale ever I sot eyes on, sir. Ain't one under a hundred an' thutty bar'l, I swar. An' thar's one—if he ain't the father of all the whales ever bo'n I ain't ever seen one before.'

For all answer the mate shouted 'Way boats! Down from aloft.' And for the next few minutes the whirring of patent sheaves, as the graceful boats ran waterwards, the hoarse, gasping orders given by the boat-headers, and the sharp concussions in the water, filled the air. What a scene of furious energy manifested by men who a little while before were lolling uncouthly about as if incapable of any exertion whatever, under no matter what stimulus or provocation! Within five minutes the ship was deserted by all her crew, save only the discontented half-dozen whose unhappy lot it was to abide by the stuff and labour monotonously to keep the ship as far to windward of the arena of battle as might be. In every man's heart there was a deep sensation of thankfulness that one ominous figure was absent from this fray—that for once they were free to do their best unhampered by the paralysing knowledge that, whatever they did, their efforts would surely be rewarded by savage treatment which they must endure, because no safe way of rebellion presented itself. How the rowers did lay to their oars! How keenly when, a sufficient weather gauge being reached, the sails were set and the boats bounded blithesomely over

the blue waves under the stress of the freshening breeze, did every man peer forward for sight of their gigantic prey ; and how fervently each harpooner hoped that he might be privileged to strike the first blow !

I have never been able to understand how it is that all other seamen seem to have cherished contemptuous feelings towards the whale-fishers. That they always have done so is undoubtedly true, and possibly the foundation of so utterly false a sentiment may have been that it is but seldom that ordinary seafarers have been able to witness the mighty conflict between men and whales. Usually when sailors meet whalers it is at a time when the latter are conserving their energies against the coming of the next great fight, or are greasily labouring to harvest their spoil, an occupation which needs much true appreciation of the romantic to see anything in it at all worthy of admiration. In the rare cases that have occurred when sailors have been in at the death of a whale, they have been simply stricken dumb with admiring wonder, and thenceforward have enjoyed a vicarious popularity as the retailers of yarns in the dog-watches to a gaping but utterly sceptical crowd of their shipmates.

So, swiftly the four boats sped whalewards, the mate always ahead, for his intense nervous energy had communicated itself to his crew, who, not content with the pace being made under the pressure of the wind, had each stealthily seized a paddle, and were thrusting them deeply into the hissing waters alongside at every opportunity that was presented, as if their overmastering impatience could not let them

rest for one instant. Strange to say, on this occasion, although it seemed to the mate that, large as the whales were, they should have long ago made their periodical descent, they did not do so, but lolled about on the bright sea-surface in an orderly series of rows which converged, until at the apex, as it were, of the whole school lay the gigantic leader of whom the second mate had spoken in such breathless terms of admiration. There could at last be no doubt about the matter : that school of whales had seen their aggressors coming, and for some mysterious reason had decided that on this occasion they would not obey their natural promptings bidding them flee, but would await the foe and do battle with him in befitting manner, with never a doubt as to the issue.

The reason for this strange behaviour could not, of course, be known to the mate, since even the keenest of human observers has never been able to penetrate the motives influencing what we are pleased to call the 'lower animals' in their pursuance of any abnormal course of behaviour ; although there can be no doubt that had he known why the whales thus awaited him, the knowledge would not have caused him to alter his procedure in any way. For he was a perfectly brave man, whom no amount of prospective peril could turn aside from what he considered to be the path of duty. True, he was but an ordinary example of the New England whale-fisher ; but it must ever be remembered that this wonderful calling —*i.e.*, hunting the sperm whale—of necessity bred a most extraordinary type of man, having as it did the grand old Puritan stock to work upon.

So Mr. Court led his little flotilla into battle, every man watching with keenest anticipation the gently heaving masses of the mighty foes, and wondering much what so unusual an attitude portended. Some of the fellows felt a queer clutching sensation at the pit of the stomach as every bound of the buoyant craft brought them nearer those silent, listless-looking whales. But it was not fear ; it was but the nerve-centres notifying the brain to call up all the energies of the body to face the unknown, and it would at the first crash of battle be replaced by a tautening of every muscle, an exaltation of spirit heady as that produced by wine, and a great, if dimly understood, sense of the power of man in the world.

A short, blast-like order, and Mr. Court, gripping his steer-oar fiercely, bent his body almost double and swung his boat's head round at right angles to the leader of the great company. His harpooner, Gonsalvo, one thigh firmly pressed into the 'clumsy cleat,' raised the harpoon high overhead, and a hissing expiration burst from his clenched teeth as the weapon flew from his hand and buried itself up to the hitches in the whale's broad side. One could see the convulsive quiver run through that vast body as the stab was felt ; but Gonsalvo did not look ; he snatched up his second iron and hurled it after the first to such good purpose that it buried itself like the first one—only about a foot higher up the body. Then, turning coolly round, the gratified assailant cast adrift the backstays of the mast and proceeded to roll up the sail as if quietly coming alongside a wharf. Meanwhile the boat had swung up into the wind and lay side by side with the whale, at a

distance of about twenty feet. Hoarsely the mate encouraged his crew in their efforts to get the hampering mast unshipped, keeping at the same time a wary eye upon his prey. He was astonished beyond measure to see that the whale made no sign beyond that quivering of the skin before spoken of, but lay as if meditating upon this strange event. Then without further sign the whale sank, sank with hardly a ripple, and for a moment or two all was quiet, just giving Mr. Court an opportunity to glance around and see that his lieutenants were all busily engaged similarly to himself.

There was no lack of readiness or watchfulness ; but suddenly a vast black mass appeared on the other side of the boat, and with a perfectly indescribable motion turned a somersault in the air, just missing, in the downward sweep of that awful tail, the frail boat by an inch or so. But the steer-oar was snapped off soundlessly, like a radish severed by the sweeping blow of a knife, leaving the boat helpless. Mr. Court's orders flew ; his men seconded him nobly, pulling first on this side, then on that, to turn the boat ; but, bereft of that great oar aft, her movements were slow and hesitating. Then uprose that massive head, with jaws wide extended, which, taking the boat amidships, crashed through her as if she had been a stick of celery, destroying utterly two men and seriously injuring the mate. His right arm and leg were broken, and his whole side lacerated in appalling fashion.

In the suddenness of the shock the mate was mercifully spared the full realisation of his injuries ; but the absence of pain only made his brain more

active, and his mental agony was extreme. For not only had he been the victim of a complete defeat, but he did not know how matters were proceeding with his subordinates, and he feared the worst. Then as he paddled mechanically, conscious of a whelming drowsiness stealing over him, his left arm touched something hard—an empty line-tub. With one last flash of energy he rove his arm through its becket and passed immediately into blissful unconsciousness, that merciful suspension of the 'suffering' faculties that has been Divinely provided to smooth the way from life to death of shrinking, sensitive flesh. His poor fellows, those who were left, were fortunately uninjured, but thoroughly demoralised at the terrible shock they had received. They also were able to support themselves amid the whirling waters upon fragments of the broken boat ; but, of course, like their officer, in a most precarious and tentative fashion.

And round about them, in leisurely fashion, as if contemplating the result of his strategical effort, swam the whale, neither doing nor attempting to do them any harm, but putting them in serious danger of drowning from the abnormal whirling of the water which the passage of his monstrous bulk effected. Occasionally, too, there would appear, cutting the water in erratic directions, the tall dorsal fin or 'gaff topsail' of a great shark, hunger-driven almost to madness by the taint of blood in the water, but (as yet) scrupulously respecting the bodily integrity of the hapless men still living. Overhead flitted restlessly a few birds, screaming mournfully, as if they realised that in the effort of providing a great

banquet for them man had utterly failed this time. But of everything except the fast-weakening desire of living the principal actors in this stormy scene were utterly oblivious, and thus for a while we must leave them.

The other three boats, arriving upon the scene of conflict almost simultaneously, saw their leader get fast to the monarch of the school. And had they obeyed the regular rule, well known to them all, they would certainly have deputed the fourth boat to lie off and watch events, in case of need for assistance. But, freed from the baleful overglance of the skipper and fired to utmost emulation of each other as they were, it was easy to forget so necessary a precaution, and consequently, each singling out his whale, the three boats rushed to the attack, all harpooning about the same time. At once the scene became almost indescribable. For the stricken whales, unlike their leader, each fought with Titanic energy to free himself from the galling weapon, rearing monstrous heads high in the air at one moment, at the next flourishing with sufficient force to smash in a ship's side their mighty tails, the supple corners of which actually snapped like whip-lashes from the vigour with which they were lashed to and fro. Also the loose whales, apparently with some indefinite object in view of rendering aid, glided about and between the combatants, making it impossible for the men to do what they tried and converting the sea into the semblance of the surface of a huge cauldron of water fiercely boiling.

Yet such was the skill and energy displayed by these hardly bestead hunters that for a considerable

time they all escaped damage, although they often did so by a couple of inches only. At last, as they were weakening, the first calamity came, sudden and complete. The third mate's boat was towed swiftly in a certain direction (and so furious had been the fight that the sail had not yet been secured) until the crew found themselves between two ominously revolving bodies, one that of the whale to which the fourth mate was fast, and the other their own quarry. There was no room wherein to use oars, nor was there time had there been place, when the two huge carcasses, rolling in opposite directions, crashed against the tender shell of the boat, which collapsed into matchwood, while the crew leapt madly upon the shiny, slippery bodies of the monsters, and, slithering downwards, disappeared in the smother of foam around.

With a groan of regret the fourth mate cut from his whale, and, regardless of his own immediate danger, incited his crew with all his powers to pick up their shipmates. And they did strive, literally for dear life. The huge bulk of the whales brushing past them, the frantic motions of their boat, apparently harassed them not at all. Intent upon the orders of the erect, keenly observant figure at the stern, they pulled, backed, peaked oars, or lay still as commanded, and while in the full tide of their tremendous labours were suddenly hoisted, as if by some submarine earthquake, upon the uprushing head of a whale ten feet into the air. They were flung in a writhing heap from their thwarts, and when they recovered themselves they were clinging sadly to a wreck, for the boat, although still holding together as to her

frame, had her keel or backbone broken in three places, and, full of water, just sufficed to sustain their weary heads occasionally above the sea surface. Even at that dread time the minds of all were bent upon the fate of those whom they had failed to rescue. For themselves they cared nothing ; they were comparatively safe with something floatable beneath their uncertain feet ; but alas for those who in that tormented whirl of waves had not even a splinter unto which they might cling hopefully.

What of the second mate ? Well, some might call him a coward, for although he had got fast like the rest, before three minutes had passed, having witnessed the disaster which had overtaken his senior officer, he had coolly cut his line and withdrawn with all the speed he could command from the arena. One thing, and one only, was in his mind, and that was how he could avoid being entangled in a fight, so that he might, as soon as opportunity offered, rush in and rescue some of the drowning ones. But, as he afterwards said, never in all his fishing had such a task fallen to his lot. For every whale in the school seemed to make for him, and although they did not attack, whales being magnanimous beyond all other powerful and sensible animals, they circled about him with majestic movement, occasionally scarifying the faces of himself and his patient men with the blistering drops from their condensed spoutings as they blew across his boat, and clearly made him understand that he existed only by their favour. And he was fretting his heart to fragments over his inactivity, and wondering how long it would be ere he could emerge from his august environment,

and save those shipmates of his whom he knew to be perishing so near. Even then he had no notion of the completeness of the disaster. But his heart failed him as he thought of meeting the tyrant of his life, on that terrible man's recovery, and endeavouring to explain away so great a failure.

Meanwhile as far as the eye could reach the boat was hemmed in by whales, that with majestic movement circled around their tiny captive, or, perpendicularly erected in the water, protruded their vast cylindrical heads from the surface like symmetrical columns of black rock. Then, as if at a given signal, the great assemblage divided, leaving between their closely packed ranks a lane of clear water. Not an instant was lost by Mr. Winslow; if his hand trembled, in its grip of the steer-oar, his voice did not; if his men looked wistfully at one another and at their gigantic escort, they pulled none the less lustily at the word of command. And presently they came upon a pitiful sight. In an area that might have been covered by a big ship's mainsail floated listlessly six men, each clinging to some derelict portion of their late vessel's equipment. None of them appeared able to appreciate their most perilous position; no gasp of fear passed their cracked and blistered lips when the long, quivering body of some ravening shark glided closely past them. No; for them nothing mattered any longer: they had passed beyond the reach of either hope or fear. And had one remembered how painful were their lives, how remote the possibilities of brightness ever lightening their dreary way through the world, the thought would inevitably have compelled admission that

it was almost criminal to bring them back again to the suffering they had left behind—especially remembering how full of pain to them would be the process.

Such an idea, however, never occurred to those tender-hearted if ruffianly looking rescuers. Forgetting all their own danger—oblivious, indeed, to anything else but the manifestly urgent needs of the perishing ones they saw around them—they toiled furiously to get the exhausted men into their boat. Nor did they desist until, the gunwale of the boat being just awash, they were warned that any further attempts to pick up men would certainly mean the loss of all, both rescuers and rescued. Six were still a-missing, but that could not be helped, and with the utmost care they moved heavily off towards the ship, which was standing down the wind in their direction. A careful shipkeeper of a whale-ship always devotes all his energies, as soon as boats have left, to keeping his vessel to windward of the scene of conflict—a position of advantage whence, when the great fight is over, he may run down with a free sheet and pick up the boats and their gigantic prizes.

So that, although the time seemed interminably long, it was really only a matter of minutes before the boat was alongside the ship and the broken men were being hauled on board. All the time this work was going on the ship was the centre of a vast assemblage of whales, seemingly satisfied that their enemies were now powerless to harm them, and, although majestically refusing to attack a helpless foe, quite determined to let that foe see unmistakably what might be his fate should his late prospective victims become

aggressive. No sooner were the rescued men on board than Mr. Winslow, as if he and his crew were machines of iron rather than men of wearable muscles, pushed off from the ship's side and carefully steering between the bulky bodies of the assembled whales, made the best of their way back to where they hoped to find the remainder of their shipmates. Six were still missing, among them the mate, who since the captain's accident had endeared himself to all hands. But it really seemed as if their colossal escort knew the errand they were upon, for their progress was hindered in the most extraordinary manner by the whales crowding about them. No assault was made; had it been, however slight, they must all have perished; but it was as if they were incessantly reminded by the whales that forbearance had, even with such magnanimous monsters, its limits, and that while no advantage would be taken of primary helplessness, they (the whalers) would not lightly be permitted to help those who were receiving the due reward of their own aggression.

So, with infinite pains, the second mate and his hardly entreated boat's crew made their way back to the scene of conflict, and found one man, the mate, still afloat, and possibly alive. They could not be sure of the latter, but took him in on the chance. Further search, although prolonged to the utmost limit of their endurance, failed to show them any more of their lost shipmates, and at last in a faint voice Mr. Winslow ordered them to give way for the ship. As his men doggedly obeyed, and called up their final reserve of energy, the attendant whales, as if satisfied with the progress of the day's events,

drew off, and with their great leader well ahead, took their departure to windward along the bright glorious path of the setting sun, whose rays touched their mighty bodies with gold and made every little spray they threw upwards in their stately progress glisten like a shower of diamonds.

The overburdened crew reached the ship without further incident, and, once alongside, realised how terrible had been the strain imposed. For even the simple business of hoisting the boat, usually a matter of at most two minutes, became a herculean task hardly to be accomplished by the united efforts of all hands remaining capable of standing on their feet. Once secured on her cranes, Mr. Winslow dismissed his boat from his mind and wearily slouched to where the mate lay on a mattress brought up by one of the harpooners. So great was his loss of vigour, that although he saw the mate had recovered consciousness and was now peacefully asleep in his drying clothes, he felt a dull want of interest in that fact, as in everything else, and without taking further interest of his surroundings or of the claims of his position, he cast himself down in the little clear space abaft the wheel on the starboard side, pillow'd his head upon his right arm, and immediately fell asleep.

The shipkeepers—that is, the four petty officers, carpenter, cooper, steward, and cook, with the four men appointed to assist them in the duty of managing the ship during the process of catching whales—had been hardly pressed both by work and anxiety. But they saw and realised how easy had been their lot as compared with that of the hunters; and

although they had well earned a relief, they said nothing, but went grimly on with their by no means easy task of preparing the vessel for the night, clearing away gear, &c.

Now during this terrible day Priscilla had found great peace. We left her at its beginning comforted as only those heavy-laden ones can be comforted who are in direct communication with the Comforter. Permeated by that Peace which passeth all understanding, she felt content to abide in quiet security any event that might happen, and she looked down upon the insensible form by her side with something of the Divine compassion, although without one spark of the human love which should exist between husband and wife. All that her simple ideas of nursing could suggest as good to be done for him she did assiduously, while his face twitched convulsively, unintelligible muttering flowed ceaselessly from his lips, and every muscle of his body seemed as if under the influence of a powerful galvanic battery.

It was very quiet down in the small cabin. The workers on deck went about their duties softly in dread of rousing the skipper, and only a faint echo of an occasional carefully modulated cry from aloft came stealing softly to her ears. She did not feel hunger, weariness, or anxiety. Whenever the good darkey steward could spare a few minutes from the work of the ship he stole down to see if he could do anything for her ; but beyond accepting a cup of tea and a biscuit at midday, she gently declined all his kindly offers. The only feeling, as she said afterwards, that did occasionally shoot athwart the placid state of her mind was one of thankfulness that her

husband was so long oblivious of all that must, she knew, be going on, for she could not help realising what his fury would be if, with all his senses about him, he should be unable to take part in the hunting.

And so quietly the long day wore to its close. She remained in utter ignorance of the outcome until, at about 7 P.M., the steward crept to her side with a cup of soup, and begged her to sup it. While she languidly did so, he sketched for her in a few hurried whispers the condition of things, and wound up by saying, his swart face looking a ghastly green in the dim light of the swinging lamp: 'An' de good Lawd Hisself only knows wa's gwine happen t' us wen *he* comes to an' fine's eout abeout it. Lawd hab massy on us all den.' She answered him not a word, but, handing back the cup, laid her tired head back in her chair and passed peacefully to sleep.

## CHAPTER IX

### REUBEN EDDY, MARINER

WE left Rube not only entered conclusively upon his new career, the very antithesis of all his previous experiences, but, by one of those mysterious happenings which prove how little we know of the workings of the human brain, completely dissociated from that former life of his as if it had never been. And yet by some merciful connection, inexplicable in view of his entire loss of memory, but certainly bridging the dark gulf, his former Christian training not merely influenced him, but its effect was intensely deepened and strengthened. So with all his old attributes of patience, of kindness, of love ; attributes which all must confess may exist without any acknowledgment on the part of their possessor of the power of Christianity at all. Also his physical powers developed amazingly. Seemingly quite careless what he ate, but always with bared head returning thanks to God for it, he threw upon that poor food until his torso would have served as a model for an ancient Greek statue of Hercules. Upon his bright face the shadow of a frown was never seen, his serenity of mind seemed proof against all the pettiness of aggravation that men allow to do so much harm in the world, the gnat-bites of daily intercourse which fester into various plagues far more

deadly in their continual evil than all the great crimes which shock us so by the horrors of their incidence upon the life of man.

And with all this he was essentially a *man*, taking with highest intelligence his daily part in all around him, excelling in ability as he did in strength every one of his shipmates until he came to be looked upon by them as a kind of demi-god whose superiority in all things they ungrudgingly acknowledged because he himself was obviously entirely unconscious of it. Forward and aft it was the same. If any felt they had aught to teach him they immediately did so for the sheer joy of the thing ; he was so eager to learn, so keen-witted in absorbing new knowledge, so humble and entirely grateful. At first this attitude of his was looked upon with suspicion by his shipmates, for suspicion and jealousy are baleful plants that thrive apace on shipboard among the crew, especially on long voyages ; then, when the impossibility of being suspicious or jealous of such a man had been fully demonstrated, good-natured, bantering toleration took its place. This was succeeded by reverence, which gradually overcame the most sceptical, those who longest maintained that 'Rube wuz jest a easy-goin' loony 'at y' c'd do anythin' y' liked with' . This latter phase of feeling towards him arose, I think, as far as the foc'sle was concerned, in consequence of the stand he took against rows in their common abiding place. Whenever men quarrelled (and shore-folk can hardly imagine how difficult it is to keep the peace in a small apartment tenanted by thirty men), Rube was at once on hand, unless it happened to be his wheel or masthead look-out.

And, owing to his great size and strength and utter disregard of himself, it was impossible to bring off a fight when he was about. For he would propose the most absurd things, such as that the two belligerents, if they felt they must beat somebody, should beat him in turn; but beat one another they should not while he was able to prevent them, and they could not doubt his ability to do that. Once an infuriated man did strike him a heavy blow full in the mouth. It was like striking a rock. Rube leaped at the striker, caught his fist, and, holding it up, said, 'Poor feller, jes' look at them knuckles, they're all cut about shameful. Less get a bit er rag an' tie 'em up.'

What could they do with a man like that but love him? Nothing. And surely never was man so loved aboard ship before. When in the long evenings after the first dog-watch the crew lolled about the fore part of the deck smoking, it became quite an institution for Rube to sit (he didn't smoke) and tell them stories in his own quaint language out of the Bible from memory. He possessed the only one on board, and read it continually in his watch below, giving up to its delights much of the time his great frame needed for sleep. Perhaps the quotation of a sample of his Bible yarns (as the fellows termed them) may be admitted.

'Way back in the old days, boys, it seems t' me that most people hed a mighty rough time of it. In th' cities, frum what I c'n see, they wuz pow'ful little 'musement fur the wealthy folks 'cept buildin' uncomfortable palaces, stuffin' grub down their necks they didn't feel to want, gettin' drunk, an' seein' a lot of poor people suffer. Funny how a man or woman

should *like* to see *sufferin'*, ain't it? Even then when these rich folks was havin' what they persuaded themselves wuz a hot ole time, they wuz always expectin' some feller 'd come along an' make a big hole in 'em with one o' them old-fashioned stickers you see in pictures, about a foot long, four inches wide, and razzur sharp on both edges. But they was a lot o' people hadn't got no palaces. They was something like sailors ashore—always on th' move, carryin' their grub with 'em, an' only stoppin' any length o' time where there was water an' plenty grass fur th' live stock. 'Course they managed t' steal a lot of poor fellers 'at didn't know enough t' keep out er the way, and make these slaves do all the work. We're most of us built like that. Comfort was a word that hadn't come into use those days; but then neither had indigestion, nerves, corns, or rheumatics. Well, among these people was one a good deal better'n most ov 'em, though, of course, he had his faults, an' his name was Isaac. Only that. Jest a given name, an' no more: easy to remember. Now this good man was well off as those days went. He had lots o' sheep 'n' goats an' donkeys an' camels, an' a mighty big country to travel about in, an' let 'em feed wherever they would, with no rent or taxes to pay. He had a wife he was very fond of—only one, which was sing'lar for those times, when th' best o' men didn't seem able to get along without a bunch o' wives. An' he had two sons. One of these sons was a fine fellow, free an' open an' brave, fond of all manly sports, but one of those chaps such as we say 'll never get on in th' world. He was his father's darlin'. The other was a quiet, say-nothin'-t'-nobody sort o'

feller, fond of hangin' around the tents and looking after the breedin' o' the cattle an' sheep, an' he was what we call a good business man. But you had to watch him close, or he'd get t' wind'ard of ye every time. His name was a sort o' warning to anybody t' keep their weather eye liftin' when he was havin' truck with 'em. It was Jacob, meanin' a feller that gets into another feller's place after he's jockeyed him out of it. An' he wasn't partikler who it was he bested, his father or his brother jes' as soon as anybody else. He was his mother's favourite.

'Well, after both boys had grown up, an' Jacob had ben workin' off his little schemes pretty frequent, 'specially on his twin brother Esau, his dotin' mother puts him up to a dodge to take in the old man, who was gettin' pretty shaky, so's he'd scratch Esau outer his will, and put Jacob in. And between 'em they rigged up Jacob in goatskins to make him feel like Esau, who was one of those big, burly, hairy men, so as his poor old father, who was blind, shouldn't know the difference, an' give him all the property as well as his blessin', which counted in them days fur even more than property. And th' scheme worked all right. But when Esau come home from the country, and found it out, Jacob had to quit, or else Esau would have killed him sure. So his mother lost him altogether. I don't s'pose that bothered him greatly. Anyhow, he did just as well in the new country he run to, and in just the same way. An' he kem back a good many years after with quite a procession of wives an' children an' no end of property, an' who should meet him but Esau, without any wives an' children or property, but an army, which was almost

the best thing to have in those days, 'cause when you'd got it you could get the other things whenever you wanted 'em by taking 'em away from somebody else.

' And Jacob, bein' scared 'most to death, offers to buy Esau off from what he s'posed was goin' to be his revenge, with a whole heap of his property. But Esau says, "Thanks, old man, I don't want to take away what belongs to you ; I've got all I want. But I'll send a bit of my army along with you to see that nobody else comes and robs ye." But Jacob says to himself, "Oh, no, this is just a scheme for taking all I've got away bymeby." So he refused. An' they parted, an' never saw one another again.'

Loud cries of 'Bully for Esau!' and opprobrious remarks about Jacob, changing into utter bewilderment when next evening Jacob's subsequent history was told in the same quaintly familiar fashion, and the justification of his being chosen by God was pointed out. For not only did Rube tell Bible stories, but in the most artless manner he based conversation upon them ; never arguing, but gently suggesting ; familiarising his hearers with Scripture in the most pleasing way, and never attempting to compel belief by his efforts. It is no exaggeration to say that in spite of the disappointment felt by the men at the long period of unsuccessful searching, Rube's sweet influence was felt by all hands. And although many of them still had their occasional doubts of his sanity, none doubted the perfect goodness and beauty of his character.

They became a very smart crew. Every duty they were called upon to perform they did as if they

loved it, and the skipper's rugged face glowed with eagerness to see how they would behave on whales if and when the chance came. But it was not until they were midway between the Line and Cape Horn that they sighted their first sperm whale. He was a lone whale of enormous size, and evidently making a passage to some other feeding-ground, since he kept his course as if steering by compass, spouting with the utmost regularity a given number of times, descending and rising again as if timed by a chronometer. Cautiously, but with all the attention possible, the ship was worked to windward of him, until, in a suppressed shout, Captain Hampden gave the order, 'Way boats!' It had previously been decided that only two boats were needed for the job, so the first and second mates' boats started, dropped alongside lightly as foam flakes, and with a long, swinging stroke they pulled away to windward. Rube was in the mate's boat pulling midship oar—the heaviest of the five—and the mate simply gasped with astonishment to see how this recent yokel handled his eighteen-foot oar, how all his powers were given to its manipulation, and what a beautiful stroke he had. They pulled for half an hour, then with sails set to the strong breeze that was blowing, bore down upon the unconscious whale, the other boat following hard after them at a cable's distance. Nearer, nearer they drew, all hands holding their breath. Now a wide sheer to port because of that little eye's power of seeing astern. They gain rapidly; they are abeam. A strong sweep of the steer oar, the main sheet is slackened off, and the boat sweeps round and leaps at the whale's broadside like a living thing.

Before she strikes, the harpooner has hurled his iron, and it sinks its length into the black side ; the whale is fast. Haul aft the sheet, flat as possible, the boat flies up into the wind, the harpooner casting out the stray line meanwhile, and there, although tossing tremendously because of the fuss being made by the indignant whale, they get the hampering sail rolled up and mast unshipped and fleeted aft out of the way.

Before they have finished their task the second mate is alongside awaiting orders. He is told not to go near, but wait and see what the whale is going to do, always an uncertain factor in scenes like this. The whale is going to behave in orthodox fashion—*i.e.*, descend to where beyond these voices there is peace. Downward he goes deliberately, as if hurry were never less needed, but apparently taking no heed of the strain kept on the line by the buoyant boat above. Presently it becomes evident that he is a stayer, for the second line-tub is nearly empty, and he shows no signs of slackening in his downward path. So the second mate is called upon to pass the end of his line aboard, and it is spliced on at once. (The strands are always kept plaited up, so that a splice may be made almost as rapidly as a knot, and much neater and more safe.) Still he goes down, down, down ; while faces gather blackness as fake after fake of line disappears. Will he *never* weaken ? The heavy drogue (equal in retarding strain to four boats) has been bent on at the splice, but seems to have no effect upon him. The mate's heart sinks. Up goes the urgent wheft, a signal to the ship that more line is needed immediately ; but, alas ! it is too

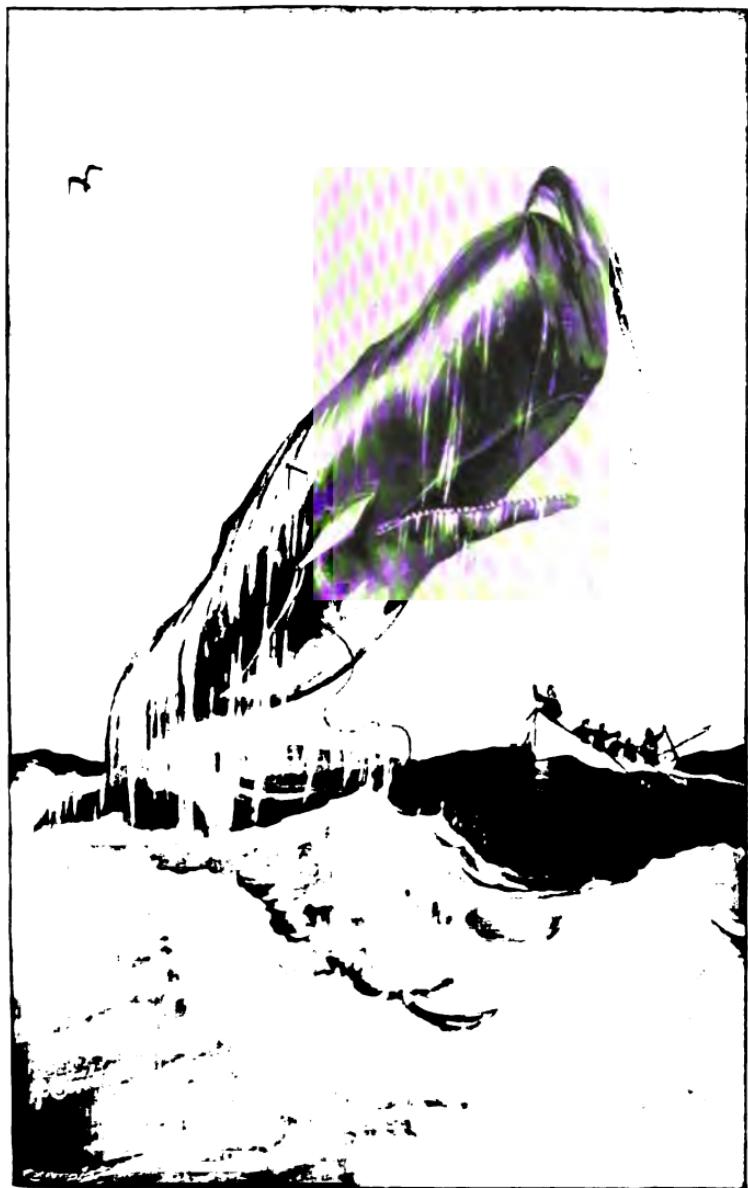
late. There is a short interval of almost agonising suspense, and the end of the line flips over the bows. He is gone !

Then the mate gives vent to his feelings. His cursings comprehensively embrace everything he can bring to memory, himself chiefly. When he is exhausted Rube's lips are seen to be moving, and the mate, fiercely desirous of some animate object whereupon to vent his rage, yells, 'You hayseed, what *you* mumblin' about ?' (I suppress even the blank profanity with which every word or two is loaded.) Rube softly replies, 'I was so sorry for your disappointment and the skipper's that I was just askin' God that all our labour shouldn't be lost.'

The mate was dumb—what could he say to this ? And every man in the boat looked at Rube as if he were uncanny—they had no more idea than most professing Christians have of the simple faith that believes in an immanent God always ready and willing to hear the requests of His children. And up into the midst of their wonderment rose the whale, the long line trailing behind him, evidently exhausted by his tremendous efforts to reach a depth of safety. A dozen strokes in reply to the swiftly shouted orders of the mate, and they were alongside of him, the harpooner had hooked up the line and passed it into the boat, and the mate had thrust his long lance so fiercely in between the third and fourth ribs of the leviathan that the whole vast body quivered from snout to flukes with the pangs of approaching death. Secure in the knowledge that he had dealt a death-blow, the mate shouted to the harpooner to cut the loose line adrift ; but even that small loss was

avoided, for the second mate's boat sheered alongside in the nick of time and took it.

No other stroke was needed ; a thin stream of blood was seen to be trickling over the edge of the spiracle, and the next great expiration hurled into the air, with a bursting groan, masses of clotted blood so large that it was almost miraculous how they had been forced along the single air-tube which supplies the lungs with breath. Filled with a great awe, the new hands drew off slowly in obedience to the orders given, unable to take their eyes off the dying giant. And then, to their horror, they saw him suddenly rear his gigantic head high in air, and hurl his body along the blood-stained sea-surface in hundred-foot leaps, swaying first to this side and then to that as if under the influence of an agony so intolerable that he was endowed with at least ten times his usual great strength. All around his awful way the sea was torn into a thousand fantastic shapes, and blocks of purple foam were flung on high and caught by the wind, which drove them like some dreadful snow in showers of flakes far to leeward. At last—and although the paroxysm had only lasted about three minutes, they seemed like hours—there was a momentary lull : the whale disappeared. But almost immediately after there was an upheaval like the rearing of a suddenly formed volcano in the midst of the sea, and high into the air soared the whole mighty mass, apparently hung suspended there for an appreciable space, and fell ! In the thundering noise and violent commotion occasioned by that great act, the hunters lost for a moment their strained attention on the whale. When they regained it he lay an inert mass, gently undu-



HIGH INTO THE AIR SOARED THE WHOLE MIGHTY MASS.



lating to the touch of the waves, with his head as usual pointed straight towards the wind's eye.

There was a great peace succeeding the tumult, and a moaning little voice in the wind which filled the air with mournfulness. Also the splash of the wavelets over the quiet bank of flesh had in it, to all seeming, a murmur of regret. The influences of that restful time affected all for a brief space, and Rube's eyes glistened as he thought of the cruel end so suddenly befalling the brave, strong, harmless monster, a short hour ago so placidly enjoying his life, and perfectly filling his appointed place in the scheme of things. But with a jerk all musings were ended, for the mate's voice broke harshly upon the accented silence, as he shouted, 'Naow, then, m' lads, pull two, starn three, an' le's git th' tow line fast, 'relse the ship 'll be here 'fore we're half ready.' She was coming straight for them before the wind, and only about a mile away—a homely, clumsy-looking craft enough, but invested for each of the green hands with a new character now, a home of rest after their late heavy toil, a place where they would be met with a great satisfaction as returning conquerors bringing their gigantic spoil with them, warriors who had abundantly justified the training they had received. They had been able in that one fleeting hour of tremendous experiences to attain unto the highest physical pleasure of which man is capable—the sense that, by the use of his puny powers, rightly directed, he is able to overcome what seems to be at first sight the most overwhelming odds brought against him. All the solemnity of the first moments of victory was forgotten, and even Rube's eyes sparkled with delight

as he watched the look of content glowing on the mate's face, as with his short boat spade he hacked at the great limber tail until he had cut a hole in it through which the tow-line could be passed.

The ship rounded to as easily as one of the boats would have done, only about her own length from the whale. And the mate with a triumphant roar of 'Give way, m'lads!' steered for her, no man prouder than he of the way in which his 'greenies' had acquitted themselves on their maiden venture. The grizzled leonine head of the skipper loomed in the waist, where, the boards out, all was in readiness to receive them. And as ready hands hooked up the tow-line, and prepared to walk up alongside the huge mass of their prize, he said to the mate standing beneath him erect in the stern of the boat: 'Wall, Mr. Pease, yew du seem t' hev got on t' a logy this time. I sh'd say he's all ov a hundred an' forty bar'l be his look, 'less he's dry-skin.' 'Nary dry-skin 'baout him, Cap'n Hampden,' replied the mate, cheerfully. 'Ile's jest a-teemin' outer him. Iron went in 's if it hed fell into a kag er butter. Fattes' whale ever I struck, 'n' that's the cole truth, sir.'

Then with a joyful noise all hands tallied on to the tow-line, and snaked that whale alongside in great shape. Everything had been prepared for the arrival, cutting falls rove, spades ranged, cutting stage ready, and although the experience was absolutely novel to most of the men, they were so keen, so eager to do as they were told to the best of their ability, that really I doubt whether the most seasoned crew could have made a better show than they did. And this in spite of the almost feverish desire possessed by all

to look upon the gigantic prize they had won in fair fight from his appointed realm, the vasty deep. It was all so wonderful, so new, so strange. And then in hurried glimpses they saw coming up in the clear blue around hosts of queer-looking creatures (to them, for none of the new hands had ever seen a shark before). One fellow, a lank Kentuckian, in a stolen moment remarked in a stage whisper to a shipmate, as they leaned over the rail hauling at the fluke-chain, 'Gosh! look 't all them little fish daown thar.' Said little fish, rising rapidly, presently revealed themselves as sharks averaging ten feet in length, who, regardless of consequences, hurled themselves end-ways at the whale's body, and gouged at it furiously, as if driven mad by hunger.

The whale fairly secured alongside, the skipper's voice rose above the tumult, commanding instant attention from everybody. 'Mr. Pease, let th' boys go to dinner. I guess we won't miss an hour, and th' weather looks sorter settled.' 'Dinner!' shouted the mate, and there was a stampede forward, for every man, as soon as he had time to think of it, was ravenously hungry. The cook had, under orders from the skipper, made a few additions to the usual dietary, and it is not too much to say that every man there when he sat down to enjoy his well-earned meal was, for the time being, as happy as ever he had been in his life. And only because the man who controlled their destinies for the time had in addition to his fund of common-sense, a little of the milk of human kindness.

A little judicious appreciation costs nothing, and is so valuable: it often lifts weary men over the dead

centres of life ; indeed, it often makes a youth who, full of fear lest in his very anxiety to do well he has made some irreparable mistake, feel that no effort can be too great to please a man who has recognised his desire to do his duty. And when, at the call of ' Turn to ! ' the rested, well-fed crowd climbed on deck again into the keen, pure air, and found that while they had been dining the skipper and his officers had been toiling at the stupendous task of cutting off the whale's head, they almost felt ashamed at having taken so long over their meal.

I know very well that there will be many a cynical sneer at this, but that does not matter at all so long as the thing is true. If men (and I care not whether they be white, black, brown, or yellow) are treated like cattle they will yield worse than bovine service ; if they are pampered and allowed to feel that they can do as they like, they will, their natural depravity getting the upper hand, become practically worthless ; but if, as under Captain Hampden, they are kept under discipline, yet made to feel that their efforts to do well are fully appreciated, they will behave as men should behave who realise to the full the dignity of obeying the call of duty, who realise abundantly how good it is to be a *man*.

## CHAPTER X

### THE *GOOD* SHIP 'XIPHIAS'

OF definite purpose I have italicised the adjective in the heading of this chapter because I have often feared that readers of 'The Cruise of the *Cachalot*' may have been led to believe that there could not be such a thing as a good whaleship. And yet even there I did try to show how vast a difference a change of captains made. The *Xiphias*, however, was good from the beginning. A certain amount of unavoidable suffering was endured by the new hands at the beginning of the cruise, consequent entirely upon the sudden violent change in their lives. And perhaps the officers were just a trifle exuberant in their attentions to the helpless, clumsy men they were endeavouring to lick into shape. But there never was any actual cruelty. Discipline once firmly established, and rudimentary ideas of the work they must do instilled into the men's minds, their lives became as comfortable as a sailor's life can ever be at sea. They worked hard, but only at necessary duties, and they were never wantonly deprived of needed rest. Their food was none too good, but it was certainly better than usual and always plentiful. Even here the genial spirit of the skipper was able to exercise itself beneficially for the comfort of his

men. He and his officers were always on the keenest look-out for fish of any sort, and no effort was spared to catch them, all sorts of fishing tackle being carried for the purpose. He knew, too, many little dodges by means of which sea-fowl could be rendered palatable, and was a past master in the art of devising changes of dietary for his crew.

But more than all this, the man himself was one of those glorious old Yankees who combine with a supreme ability to command their fellows—a power of enforcing discipline among the roughest with splendid, never-failing courage—the simple, fun-loving, joyous instincts of a child: terrible in their just anger to meet as a tiger in the jungle, but happy and light-hearted as any child when their men behave like men. So that Captain Hampden was not merely obeyed, he was loved both by officers and men, and all the more because not one of them would have dared to impose upon him in any way. I speak feelingly, for I know the man, who now, midway between eighty and ninety years of age, is not in his second childhood, but his first, his broad back unbent, his hawk-like eye undimmed, his huge limbs as steady as they were half a century ago. To him the children flock as to one who understands them. They talk to him as to one of themselves, and parents laughingly upbraid him with being foremost among the mischief-loving urchins of the sweet little New England town in which he lives. And I am sure that when the call comes for him to close his long and useful schooling here, he will lie down to sleep with the perfect confidence of a little child. It would be an impertinence to say 'God bless him,' for God has

blessed him exceedingly abundantly, and made him also a blessing to many thousands who are the happier for his having lived.

But I must get back apologetically to the *Xiphias*, with her crew girding their loins to the great task in front of them. The cutting-in of the first whale of a voyage is always a serious matter, since the crew, however willing, must needs be educated in the performance of an entirely novel task. I am anxious not to repeat myself, but the work of collecting the spoil from a dead whale is of so wonderful a character—is, in spite of the greasy nature of the surroundings, so truly romantic—that the temptation to dwell upon its description is ever present. To the casual unthinking observer there may seem nothing very wonderful in the operation of cutting-in, except the astounding magnitude of the masses raised from the body and disposed of in the blubber-room and on deck. But really it is a piece of work requiring not merely the utmost skill and care on the part of its directors, but a certain natural aptitude as well, for want of this latter characteristic always entails an enormous amount of extra labour upon the crew. Take, for instance, the preliminary operation of cutting off the huge head. Even with the utmost skill this task demands an amazing amount of muscular force, but if that be wrongly applied it is indeed a heart-breaking job. There is practically nothing to guide the eye in the selection of a line upon which to start cutting down into the body and finding the junction of the neck. And there is in a whale of the size captured by the *Xiphias* fully six feet of muscular tissue to be severed by the spades

before the central bone is reached. In other words, the diameter of the body there is about fourteen feet. A few inches to one side or the other, and the work may take double the number of hours it should do, while the able whaleman will plunge unerringly down through the mass blow after blow of his razor-edged spade until he feels—he cannot see—his blade strike the exact spot in the centre of the joint, a ball-and-socket about fourteen inches in diameter.

So well had Captain Hampden and his officers performed their task that when the crew rushed on deck eager for work the joint had been severed, a hole had been bored through the snout, and the end of a snout-chain was already passed through this hole and dangling down under water, awaiting the turning over of the carcass to be got hold of. This was for the purpose of dropping the head astern when it was cut off, for it is always the last to be dealt with.

Swiftly the chain-sling was passed round the base of the lower jaw, hooked to one of the big tackles, with a cheery shout the windlass levers were manned, and presently, upward pointing, arose the shaft of bone, studded with foot-long teeth, while the officers cut vigorously away at the throat, and started the unwinding of that thick overcoating of rich fat their prize had worn so long. And all the while the busy spades of the skipper and mate went plunging almost with the regularity of a pair of pistons down into the scarph dividing the head from the body, until as the first blanket piece rose alongside the head slipped easily aft and floated, an almost cylindrical mass of some thirty-five tons in weight, at the end of a hawser passed over the taffrail.

All plain sailing now for a time. Merrily clattered the pawls, accentuated by the occasional cries of 'Heave on yer whale!' 'Surge on yer piece!' 'Vast heaving!' 'Lower away!' 'Walk back!' and the like, all so definite in their application with seamen, and so utterly unintelligible ashore. So briskly, indeed, did the work go on that in less than an hour from the time that the first blanket piece was lowered into the blubber-room, all hands were gratified to see the great flukes dangling at the end of a tackle, the last joint of the backbone having been cut through and the mountainous mass of black flesh allowed to drift slowly away, torn at by innumerable sharks on all sides, and the centre of a perfect cloud of screaming sea-birds.

Now for the head. Smart as the work had been, there was no time to be lost. Although the whale had been struck at 8 A.M., it was now nearly 3 P.M. Barely three hours of daylight remained ; and, besides, on the south-eastern horizon there was rising a mass of cloud, with outlines as sharp and clearly defined as those of a mountain. It loomed ever higher, vast, menacing, and deepening into blackness. But although the skipper could not help casting an anxious glance to windward occasionally, his manner was cheery as ever, and he and his officers toiled as if fatigue was to them a word without meaning. Certainly, whatever other virtues be denied them, the Yankee whaling officers could never be accused of laziness. If they worked their men almost to death they never spared themselves : they always led the way, and showed by their example what a man could do if he tried.

The task of dividing the 'case' and 'junk' from the head, which was now taken in hand, is the heaviest of all, not excepting cutting off the head. For the case is a huge oblong tank, full of pure spermaceti, and extending almost the whole length of the head, of which, indeed, it forms nearly half the bulk. It must be cut out, for in a whale of this size it contains nearly three tons of spermaceti as fluid as oil, and there is no way of getting at this precious substance without lifting the whole case. Lifting the head entirely is sometimes effected, but only when the whale is small. In so large a one as this the lifting of the case alone when detached is a task demanding the utmost energy of all hands, and often, when a heavy sea is running, straining the ship dangerously. Even then it cannot be taken on board, but must be suspended alongside, and the spermaceti baled out of it with a bucket in a most cumbrous and unsatisfactory way. The junk, being one solid mass cut off the point of the snout, and weighing about four or five tons, is easier dealt with, since a slip of the spade in cutting it off does not mean a possible leakage of all its valuable contents, for in it the spermaceti is contained in cells as water is held in a sponge, and is, moreover, almost congealed.

By dint of the most strenuous toil, the junk and case were separated, and the former hove on deck and secured, half an hour before dark. Then the mighty case was hooked on and held up alongside. As the ship was beginning to roll uneasily in the new cross swell coming up from the south-east, precursor of the impending storm, it was necessary to pass a heavy chain around it to bind it in to the

side. Then a light spar was rigged across the two tackles, high above the case, and a single whip or pulley, with a rope running through it, to one end of which was attached a long bucket. Then a man—he happened to be a merry little Irish teamster, named MacManus—mounted nimbly aloft, and sat upon the spar grasping a spade pole, with which to push the bucket down into the case after he had slit open the top of it. Then, at his word, the waiting men on deck hauled the bucket out and lowered it to the tank awaiting its contents on deck.

Meanwhile all on deck were as busy as ants. Inspired by the skipper, they toiled to get the decks clear, and certain of them, at the word, rushed aloft to furl the few remaining sails that were set, except the close-reefed main topsail. Rube, being on the leeside, did not trouble to cross the deck and go up in orthodox fashion, but as he climbed somewhat wearily he saw MacManus take a header from his precarious seat into the yawning cavity of the case. A scream of horror burst from his lips, but overcoming the paralysis that momentarily affected his bodily powers, he leaped like a cat from the main shrouds to the cutting falls, and, grabbing the bucket in one hand, slid down into the yawning chasm beneath. As he went he felt the slimy walls of the great case embracing him all round, and thought with agony of the depth beneath him—fourteen feet at least of oil—then soundlessly the bland greasiness closed over his head, and all was darkness. But his mind was clear, and his hope was high that those who saw him go would spring to the whip and haul up ere it was too late. And while he thus thought

he groped with one arm through the bucket loop, and, feeling something hard, seized it with a drowning man's grip just as he felt himself ascending. Reluctantly those sucking walls yielded up their prey ; his arms felt as if they were being torn from their sockets ; but although there was a roaring as of loudest thunder in his ears, he held on. And presently he hung limply in mid-air, one arm still through the bucket loop, the other around the body of MacManus. Four eager and willing men slid down the falls and seized the pair. Securing them with ropes passed to them from the main-top, they lowered them as rapidly as possible on deck. Even then there was no time to be lost, for both were apparently dead—ears, nostrils, and mouths being clogged with the rapidly coagulating spermaceti. But after the application of some highly original methods of clearing it away, and most patient artificial respiration following it, the pair gradually returned from their visit to the shades, and sat up wonderingly.

It was not for several hours that either of them could recall what had befallen them, and when they did both fell a-trembling violently as they again realised the sensation of sliding down into that darksome well of grease. But Rube recovered first, having, as he said, the need laid upon him to offer up thanks to God for permitting him to save his shipmate's life. He remembered how, as he slid out of the fast-fading daylight, his heart said, 'O God, make me save him,' and he felt that by nothing short of a miracle he had been able to do so. Poor MacManus could not speak of it, so broken up was he, but for hours,

emitting every now and then a rending sob, he lay holding Rube's hand in his as if only by so doing could he be prevented from gliding back again into that pit of death.

This accident had, of course, caused much delay, but still, through the now almost pitchy blackness of the night, by the aid of cressets of blazing fuel suspended from the boat-davits, the work had gone on, until at four bells (10 P.M.) a few strokes of a spade released the ponderous mass from its slings, and with a sullen, thunderous boom it fell back into the sea. Immediately upon its disappearance the skipper ordered half the crew below for a couple of hours' rest, and himself hastened to visit the victims of the late mishap. He found MacManus asleep, nervously twitching all over, but Rube lying with hands folded on his breast, his lips moving slowly as he murmured praises for his deliverance.

'Well, Rube, 'n' haow d'ye seem t' be hittin' it b' now, hey?' said the old man cheerily.

Rube turned on him a dazzling smile, and answered in a quiet tone: 'Jes' s grand 's grand kin be, Cap'n. I don't know as I was ever so happy in all m' life. Only one thing I'm sorry fur, 'at I kain't be up 'n' doin' my share o' th' work that's goin' on. But as yew're all so kind, I don't feel able t' worry nearly 's much 'bout that 's I feel I oughter.'

'Jes' yew stop right thar,' said the skipper. 'Don't wanter hyar 'et yew're worryin' any 't all. Why, blame my cats, I want ye well, 'n' haow in thunder air ye goin' t' git well ef you lays thar a-worryin'? Guess me an' th' rest ov yew're ship-mates 'll dew all th' worryin' that's called fur till

yew're round again. We kain't git 'long 'thout yew a bit, 'n' thet's a fact.'

'Ah, Cap'n,' murmured Rube, 'it does sound good ov ye to say so, and say it so kinder tender like. Fact is, yew're all of ye so kind 'at I'm 's happy as a man k'n be. Nothin' don't seem able t' hurt me. Naow and then thar's a set o' blurred pictures comes up in my mind of a long time ago, when I was very unhappy an' looked ahead to see nawthin' but trouble an' misery waitin' fur me all my days. But it never gits quite clear. I never remember anything fur certain, and I don't seem ter—I kain't seem ter—feel 'at I keer a row o' pins what's goin' t' happen ter-morrer. I seem ter ben here all my life, 'n' don't want a little bit t' be anywhere else. I ain't gut a care ner a fret ner a want in the world.' Then, as the Captain turned as if about to leave abruptly—for the need upon him to do so was great—Rube gently laid a detaining hand upon his arm, saying: 'Cap'n, I believe it's all the goodness of God. Some of us don't think as much of Him as we might. I know I don't, but I b'lieve ther' ain't one of *us* but what thinks more about God's love to 'em than they do 'bout anythin' else in this world.' 'Stop,' almost shouted the skipper, 'yew're hurtin' me wuss 'n ye know. I dassent say a word 'at w'd hurt yer faith in us, but fur God's sake don't make us out like that. I kain't tell ye haow mean an' low down an' ord'nary yew make me feel when yew talk like that. Naow I must git, fur yew're mighty low, 'n' I got work wants doin'. Try an' git t' sleep an' be about among us as quickly as ever yew can.' And the skipper hurriedly departed.

In truth he was glad to get away from what was rapidly becoming an intolerable situation. Back to his mind had been brought with startling clearness the old Quaker home, the sweet placid face of his mother, as with a cooing gentleness she taught him to utter his earliest prayers to the All-Father with whom she was on such beautifully intimate terms. He remembered how the light upon his mother's face always seemed to him to be reflected from the sky, and how he used to shut his eyes tight and wish that he might have a vision of that dear Friend whom he felt sure that mother could see and hear so clearly. Also the grave face of his father came up before him, never, as far as he could remember, lit by a smile, always looking as if the tremendous realities of life had left their indelible impress there. He knew that while he had loved his mother he had reverenced his father, but never seemed able to get beyond that feeling of awe-stricken admiration. Then came the death of both those holy ones, the breaking up of the old home, and the gradual loss through the struggling years that followed of personal communion with his mother's Friend, while still retaining through all the hardnesses of a whaler's life a blend of her sweet temper and his father's exalted rectitude. And now he was set a-wondering in the presence of this gentle 'greenie' how much he had lost through his gradually letting slip his acquaintance with his mother's God. But like most men of Anglo-Saxon race, he felt a strange fear lest he should betray to anyone around him these ennobling, uplifting thoughts that welled up from his heart. His face burned and his voice trembled curiously as he walked among his toiling

men, glancing furtively at each familiar face as if wondering whether any of them could detect any difference in him—for difference he knew there was—from what he had been yesterday.

After a short interval of oversight, a few words with the officers who were superintending the commencement of the trying-out process, and an entirely contented look around at the storminess of the night, he said to the second mate, who was in charge of the watch at the time: ‘ Wall, Mr. Peck, I guess I’ll go and turn in fur a spell. It’s goin’ t’ be a dirty night, an’ ye mout’s well rig up the cover over th’ try-works, ‘case it rains, ‘r she ships any water. Don’t want th’ pots bilin’ over ‘n catchin’ light, do we? Nawthin’ else yew’d like t’ talk t’ me abaout, is there, ‘fore I go below? ’ ‘ No, sir,’ said the officer; ‘ everythin’ seems to be goin’ in good shape so far, ‘n’ as fur this dirt, wall, I reckon the moon’s ‘bout due at seven bells ‘n’ I shouldn’t wonder if she scorfs it all.’ ‘ Ha, ha,’ laughed the old man; ‘ it’s mighty certain she wunt scorf the fly jib anyhaow. It’s too well fast fur thet Good-night.’ He alluded to the old, old yarn at sea of the careful mate who, because the night was threatening in appearance, asked the skipper whether he shouldn’t ‘take some of the kites off her.’ ‘ Oh, no,’ said the skipper, ‘ the moon ’ll scorf (eat) all that’ (alluding to the ugly appearance of the clouds). But when aroused by the tumult on deck an hour or two latter the skipper came rushing on deck and anxiously inquired what had become of the flying jib, the mate replied nonchalantly, ‘ Oh, the moon’s scorfed that, sir.’

Diving below, the old man took a searching look

at his barometer, noted the direction of the ship's head, and then passed on to his own tiny state-room, slipped off his boots and sat down. Alone with his thoughts, they flew back again to that far-off time to which they had been directed by his contemplation of Rube. Slowly his head dropped upon his hands, lower and lower he bowed himself, until, utterly oblivious of all the sea-noises around him, of the uneasy motion of his ship as she headed the rising sea, or of his responsibility for the welfare of every soul on board, he slipped down upon his knees, and as simply as ever he did when a child, but with an added fervour, he lifted up his heart to God.

It was at least half an hour before he rose from his knees, but in the space of that brief period he had learned more than most men learn during the whole of their lives. Confessing his sins he asked for pardon, admitting his blindness he asked for sight, acknowledging his ignorance he asked for teaching ; and he obtained all his desires. Then with a sense of lightness and freedom from care never before felt he lay down on his little settee to be ready for a call, and in about the space of one minute was fast asleep.

On deck, the scene to an uninitiate would have been appalling. With a monotonous, never-ceasing, and ever-increasing wail the wild wind bore down out of the windward blackness upon the brave old ship. A peep over the weather bulwarks revealed the long, long ranges of gleaming wave-crests rolling down upon her, their uncanny greenish light flickering against the black background and showing by

the distances they were apart longitudinally how mightily the waves had grown. There was a fascination about them, too, which held the observer gazing until like a splash of small shot a spray of spindrift struck him in the face and sent him smarting to shelter. But as if it had been the finest of summer evenings the steady stress of labour continued. Up from the blubber-room were hurled the massive horse-pieces of blubber, carved with so much labour from the great blanket pieces by the slipping, struggling labourers below. Of all the strange places I have ever seen I think the blubber-room of a whale-ship at night in a gale of wind is beyond comparison the strangest. It is a square space of about thirty feet each way and between six and seven feet high. Into it are piled the blanket pieces, those immense widths of blubber, each weighing a ton or so, which have been ripped from the carcass of the whale. In uncouth masses they lie one upon another, piled often almost to touching the beams overhead. As the ship rolls they glide and heave upon one another as if still actuated by the breath of the monster they so lately covered. From a beam, generally in a corner, swings a primitive lamp, little more than accentuating the darkness. And at the beginning of operations two dim forms crawl precariously about among those greasy masses, occasionally slipping a leg down into a temporary crevice and having it squeezed into numbness before being able to withdraw it. They wield short-handled spades like Dutch hoes, and with infinite labour hew off blocks from the masses of blubber of a fit size to pass through the mincer. When they have a dozen or so of these blocks ready

they must needs in some unexplainable fashion balance themselves under the hatchway, and with a sort of diminutive pitchfork hurl the blocks (horse-pieces) upwards into a shallow trough secured to the coaming or upper edge of the hatch, whence the attendant on the mincer loads a tub with them and drags them away. And unless these blubber-room men be exceedingly skilful as well as strong, they will not only never have a breathing space during the six hours of their stay below, but will, in addition, have to bear much contumely from the officer in charge, who will be instant in his sarcastic inquiries as to what they may be doing below—whether they are asleep or not.

The clank-clank of the mincer is unceasing, tall tongues of flame from the funnels of the try-works make long red smears upon the gloom as they stream away to leeward, and the two harpooners feed the bubbling cauldrons with minced blubber, bale out the sufficiently boiled oil, and watch with unceasing care against a sudden splash of cold water into the pots, which may cause the oil to rise in a moment, and, overflowing into the furnaces, set fire to the ship. All the watch is so busy that there is no time to notice the weather, or moralise upon this most romantic scene—a ship's company who, having succeeded in winning from a hostile element the spoil of the mightiest creature known, have now converted their vessel into a floating factory, and under the most extraordinarily difficult conditions conceivable are engaged in realising that spoil in order to convey it to their home port thousands of miles away.

Here let us leave them for awhile, and exercising our privilege of instant transition, glance back at the quiet village whence the departure of our hero withdrew so much consolation and manly assistance in the old age of his parents.

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## CHAPTER XI

### AT THE OLD HOMESTEAD

SATURDAY night in the Eddy homestead. In their respective chairs, occupied by them with hardly a break through thirty-eight years of ideally happy married life, sat Farmer Eddy and his wife. The labours of the week were ended, the hired people gone to rest, and husband and wife sat face to face as they had done for so many years, but never until the last six months with such weary hearts. Mrs. Eddy had aged very much. Not that any care for her boy's spiritual welfare worried her—she felt as certain of him in that respect as if he had been always under her eye. But since his departure from New Bedford in the *Xiphias* it was as if he had passed into the eternal silence, and although she said little her heart-hunger was terrible. His last letter was but half-a-dozen lines, hastily scrawled and posted without signature, telling his parents that he was outward bound on a South Sea whaling voyage, and in the hurry of the moment omitting to mention even the name of his ship. Naturally, therefore, as the days went by lengthening into weeks, the weeks into months, the disease of uncertainty made her its prey, and she aged fast, perhaps as much from the heroic effort she made to conceal her anxiety from her husband as from its direct effect.

Alas, what Mrs. Eddy endured has too often been the lot of American mothers. For in those days recruiting agents for the New England whalers prowled about the country beguiling simple young men with specious tales of the glories of a roving life and the wealth they would by-and-by bring home. And as the recruits never knew where they were going except that it was out upon the wide ocean, nor when they might possibly return, except that it must not *legally* be longer than four years, the news they were able to send their people at the time of shipment, even supposing they felt in good heart enough to do so, was of necessity extremely meagre. Nor were opportunities for sending letters frequent afterwards. An occasional whaler was spoken which might or might not be homeward bound in the course of a year or so. It was hardly worth while entrusting letters to such a casual packet as that. And the land touched was almost always carefully selected for its aloofness from civilisation, as well as its offering few inducements to a would-be deserter who was anxious to return home.

Farmer Eddy went about much the same as usual but noticeably graver, and, if possible, more gentle than ever. He never spoke to his neighbours about his son, and scarcely ever to his wife, but this latter omission mattered little, since at the evening prayer he had ever since Rube's departure devoted at least half of that pleasant season to pleading with his Father for his son. Together as the old couple knelt they saw with the eye of faith Rube upheld in right-doing, cleansed by affliction, drawn nearer to God, and never unmindful of them. Their simple assurance that all

was well with him never wavered, nor, although they so seldom mentioned his name at any other than these sacred times, did either of them lose his image from their mental vision for one waking hour. Here, however, Farmer Eddy had one advantage over his wife—the usual one, she was the mother. And as such she could no more help yearning over her absent son than she could help breathing. Her faith was as robust as her husband's without doubt, but, oh, she wanted her boy back so badly.

In a worldly sense all had prospered with them, and looked as if that prosperity would continue. And they had been almost compelled to extend their possessions by the acquisition of the Fish farm. For after Priscilla's departure with her husband, Mrs. Fish, feeling utterly alone except for the hired girls who came and went, visibly drooped day by day. Mrs. Eddy came as often as she could to visit her old friend, but that was not often, and moreover her visits were of necessity very short. Not only was Mrs. Fish lonely, but her heart was a prey to all sorts of apprehensions. Jake, her eldest son, was steadily going from bad to worse, leaving the oversight of the farm more and more to his younger brother Will, who, instead of rising to the occasion, chafed and fretted at his position of, as he put it, farm-bailiff without salary, except what Jake was minded to fling him occasionally with an air of lofty contempt. Unknown to either his mother or brother, but not unsuspected, Jake was also mortgaging the farm up to the very roof-tree of the house, and, with an infatuation almost amounting to lunacy, was spending the money in riotous trips to New York and Boston. He appa-

rently did not permit himself to think at all of the certain ruin he was courting, nor spend one thought upon the unmerited suffering he was bringing upon his mother and brother.

The climax was reached at last by his returning from one of his New York trips accompanied by an exceedingly handsome but vulgar young woman, whom he swaggeringly announced as his intended bride. His brother and mother were sitting at their evening meal when this happened, and when he made the announcement his mother, with one swift and comprehensive glance at her son's female companion, rose from her seat, saying, 'Will, he'p me up stairs.' Jake, his face flaring with rage, interposed between the departing pair and the door, demanding almost in a shout and with many oaths what they meant by insulting him and his intended wife. Releasing his mother's arm, Will took a step towards his brother, saying quietly and distinctly: 'Yew misbul shote, ain't it 'nough fur yew t' break mother's heart with yer goin's on but yew must insult her ole age by bringin' *that* home an' flauntin' it in her face. Naow, 'r ye goin' t' git aout o' eour way or ain't ye——?'

There were no more words. Jake, maddened, flew at his brother's throat, and the pair, both strong young men, but the elder much debilitated by his recent excesses, writhed and wrestled and tumbled about the living-room like a pair of tigers. The woman Jake had brought with him, retreating to a safe corner, eyed the wretched struggle with a serene aloofness befitting a Roman amphitheatre, but the mother sat wringing her hands and feebly calling

upon her sons for God's sake to cease their unnatural strife. Suddenly, over the wreck of the table, the pair collapsed, Will uppermost. Hoarsely he shouted, as with one knee on his brother's breast, one hand clutching Jake's throat, he raised himself a little : 'Y' onnatural beast, will y' git eout o' this, 'r sh'll I kill ye t' onct? Y' ain't fit t' live, I know, but b' th' 'Tarnal y' ain't fit t' die. Will y' git 'r shall I mash y'r face into a jelly?' 'Yes, I'll go,' gasped the almost choking man, and Will, carefully releasing him, watched him out of the house, and into the buggy, which had been waiting ever since he arrived. No sooner had the pair taken their seats, and the horse, under a merciless cut of Jake's whip, had bounded off, than Will returned to his mother, finding her in a dead faint ; indeed, looking as if coming to again was a quite unlikely contingency. Desperately alarmed, Will called for the hired girl, who had been busy outside, and leaving his mother to her care, hitched up his cart and drove furiously over to the Eddy place. It did not take many minutes for him to persuade Mrs. Eddy to return with him to the aid of his suffering mother. But when they arrived she was past all earthly comfort. Her mind wandered from the good man of her youthful days to Priscilla and Jake ; the only one she did not mention in her rambling remarks was Will. But he, good fellow, made no sign of how this omission smote upon his heart. Nevertheless, could anyone have read his thoughts, it would have been seen how deeply he was wounded, and how sincere was his unspoken resolve that, should his mother die, the home of his youth, grown hateful to him, should know him no more.

At 4 A.M. Mrs. Fish passed away, still unconscious of those around, still talking more or less intelligibly of her husband and elder son and daughter. And Mrs. Eddy, tired out, having first persuaded Will to retire, went to her own well-earned rest against the labours of the coming day. The following week tried her and her husband to the utmost, for Will, besides being almost penniless (his brother having had every cent he could lay hands on), manifested much eagerness to be gone and leave everything just as it was. Farmer Eddy was at his wits' end what to do, and it was no small relief to him when a Boston lawyer came down empowered to sell the place and all that was on it to the highest bidder for the benefit of the mortgagees. Then it was that Mr. Eddy decided to buy, being, as he said, desirous that the heart-broken young man, now so eager to be gone, should, if he were ever able, be allowed to redeem the home of his childhood from the careful hand of a friend instead of seeing it pass into the unsympathetic grip of a stranger. Will professed entire indifference, but no doubt the unostentatious kindness of his father's old friend did him much good—especially when in the kindest manner possible Farmer Eddy pressed upon him a sufficient store of dollars to allow him time to look around in Chicago, whither he was bent upon going.

Farmer Eddy saw him off, gave him his blessing, but very little advice (wise man!—full well he knew how advice at such a time would be received), but earnest encouragement to keep up communication between himself and his old home; 'for—who knows?' said the good old fellow—'your sister may want a

home some day.' To his utter amazement Will turned upon him almost fiercely, saying: 'That wouldn't be a bad thing for her. It might throw for her the true light upon how she treated mother. Don't talk t' me of Pris. I don't care a cent what becomes of her—' But the farmer, with uplifted hand, stayed him, saying: 'Don't, Will. Yew're het up naow, an' say wut ye don't at all mean. Thar, we won't persoo th' subjec'. Let me know as often as ye can haow yew're gittin' along, an' I'll be glad. Good-bye, my boy, good-bye.' And the last of the Fish family departed.

Thenceforward the Fish place received even more attention than did his own homestead from old man Eddy. He looked upon it in the light of a sacred trust, a view in which he was keenly supported by his wife. For he did cherish an earnest hope that some day his old friends' children might be reunited, purged by suffering, and, returning to their old home, find with grateful hearts how good to them had been the God of whom they had thought so little. And to this end he and his wife added to their nightly intercourse with their Friend the petition that these wayward ones might yet be gathered in and find peace at home.

Of Priscilla, of course, they had never heard a word since her departure, but without a shade of resentment they remembered her and wondered how she was faring. Their ideas, naturally, could be only of the vaguest, since they knew no more than they did of Reuben where she was or whither she was going. But from what they had heard from Will, applying sensibly considerable allowance for pique,

they feared that she had before now found how great a mistake she had made, and had repented too late to avoid the suffering it had entailed. But none of these reflections had the effect of making them despair of a righting of matters at the long last, and so they cheerfully took up the additional burden of their self-imposed duties, finding that, so far from their being irksome to perform, they brought with them many consolations. If only they could have heard from Rube! But apparently that could not be, and so they waited, in patient well-doing, for the breaking of the day.

When Jake, driven forth ignominiously from the home he had so wronged, by the brother he had despised, returned to New York, he was utterly reckless. Without troubling to look into his affairs, he and his companion were driven from the dépôt to a high-class hotel, where they immediately resumed the course of high living and deplorable extravagance which seemed to have become necessary to Jake's life. Now, the squandering of money is a thing that requires very little teaching, and can be carried on successfully in most so-called centres of civilisation, but I doubt very much whether any great city can afford the spendthrift more facilities for speedily reaching the end of his resources than New York. For its plethora of supereminently wealthy men have perhaps unconsciously raised such a standard of expenditure as does not obtain anywhere else in the world, and, of course, this is ever before those fools who have neither sufficient money nor brains as a shining example to go and do likewise as closely as circumstances will permit them. Without blaming

the multi-millionaires too much, there can be no doubt that the example most of them set in the direction of foolish waste of money is wholly evil.

So it came about that a fortnight after Jake Fish's return to New York he had exhausted every possible means of raising funds, and was confronted with the prospect of being utterly unable to meet his bill due on Saturday at the Hoffman House. Sobered a little by this, he consulted his companion on the matter, and suggested her parting with some of the costly jewellery he had given her. Vain fool! She sympathised with him tearfully, avowed her willingness to share a crust with him rather than live in luxury with any other man, said the shock had so unnerved her that she must go and lie down awhile to recover herself, after which she would come with him and dispose of all the glittering 'trash'—yes, she called it that—when they would go away to some quiet spot and be very happy. Overjoyed, Jake lavished multitudinous caresses upon her, sent her up stairs, and retired to the smoke-room to work out some plan for making these new funds go as far as possible without too much appearance of retrenchment. Then in his easy chair, surrounded by every luxury of appointment a man could desire, he fell asleep.

He was awakened by a waiter, who handed him a scented note. At first he stared at the man stupidly, only half awake, and utterly uncomprehending. Then as sense returned he tore open the envelope and read :

'Dear Jake,—You've had a pretty high old time, and so have I. But you might have the savvy to let

it go at that. You must be a bigger fool than even I took you for if you imagine that I am going to slide down to the bottom along with you, and begin by coughing up all the stuff you've paid me with. No, no ; you've been playing long enough : now run along like a wise little man and *earn* something. I'm off on a much better campaign. Good luck.—Not yours,

‘A. C.

‘P.S.—If you feel inclined to kick, watch out how you do it. It isn't very healthy exercise for you.’

Jake read this letter thrice without understanding a word of it. Its general import he knew, and it had paralysed him. He sat staring stupidly at the paper until the waiter, nudging him, politely called his attention to the fact that his bill was before him. That roused him as does the far-heard crack of the fowling-piece arouse the timid hare. Summoning all his energies, he dismissed the waiter with a curt ‘All right, I'll ‘tend t' this d'reckly,’ and rising, lounged toward the lift, his head throbbing furiously. Poor wretch, he was really more fool than rogue—thoroughly selfish, yet beaten by one more selfish than himself, upon whom he had lavished all he had ; heartless towards his own, yet punished for his benevolence to a stranger who had befooled him ; he was really a fair type of a large class of men everywhere who are only virtuous because they lack opportunity or initiative to be otherwise. Reaching his sumptuous room, he found his clothes bestrewing the floor, showing how thorough had been the search made by the departed one for portable plunder. He felt his head beginning to swim, and realising that he *must*

escape or make the acquaintance of a Tombs gaoler, he pulled himself together, slammed his door, and, descending by another lift, passed from the hotel and was soon lost in the crowd.

Now, there is one tremendous difference between the cities of North America and those of Great Britain in respect of their harbourage of such men as Jake Fish was now in a fair way to become. London, for instance, seems to offer a premium to the most worthless. A loafing, shiftless vagabond need exercise no ingenuity, no originality of resource, in order to be better looked after in every way than, let us say, a seaman in a merchant ship. London work-houses swarm with humans of this type, well fed, well clothed, well housed, and, oh, *so* tenderly entreated as to work. Any little ailment that a working man would never notice is considered sufficient warrant for lapping these spoilt children of fortune in cotton wool and tenderly nursing them back to convalescence again in palace chambers fitted with all the appliances for the healing of disease that the mind of benevolence and medical skill can devise. And for all this the sorely burdened ratepayer must needs provide, although he, in common with most of England's working poor, thinks of the workhouse as the home of disgrace, and would in most instances rather die of starvation in silence than go there.

But in North America, while there is great store of loafers, not confined either to the lowest class, they must have some original talent, some inventive enterprise about them, whether in criminal way or merely low trickery. Otherwise they become hoboes, or as we should call them in England 'tramps,' whose

chief qualifications must be an unconquerable aversion to work, great powers of passive endurance, a love of filth—in fact, a reversion to the worst type of savage without one savage virtue. There is little room, however, for the hobo in a city. The exercise of his chosen calling needs great open spaces sparsely peopled, where there are hardly any police. Moreover, the hoboies, according to Mr. Josiah Flynt, are a close corporation looking with much disfavour upon would-be recruits, so that admission to their ranks is not easily gained.

Jake Fish then, had he realised it, was in evil case. He was a veritable prodigal, unrepentant, and with no father's house to return to in case of repentance. Only fit for farming, and hating that furiously, he had no idea of doing anything else for his bread, and, as we have seen, his tastes were costly. Consequently, now that he had spent all, he felt that he had a bitter grievance against society for not graciously providing him with the means to continue his career of viciousness. But he was, besides, an arrant coward, an essentially worthless man, such as may be, by a miracle, made into a useful member of society, but, alas, very seldom is. He drifted down, down, down. The few dollars in his pockets when he left the hotel were squandered with the same utter absence of forethought as had always characterised him, and then, when, driven by hunger, he would have obtained some labouring work, he found himself fiercely shoved aside by far better men.

He disappeared. Not that there is not work and food for all in the Great Republic, but the conditions of life are strenuous, and if a man will not work, and

work hard, he must scheme, and that cleverly, or he will certainly disappear as Jake did, and no one will take any trouble to inquire whither.

Will, on the other hand—bright, eager, and industrious—arrived in Chicago with resolute determination to take his fate by the throat, also to husband his small resources with the utmost care while seeking among the busy throngs for something that he could do. And he was determined not to stand choosing, but to do as he had read that so many others had done—take the first employment offered, no matter how deficient in qualification he might feel himself to be for it, and, having once got work, to strive manfully to keep it, and rise from one point to another by ceaseless attention and industry, and, above all, to avoid the saloon (public-house) as he would a plague-spot. Fortunately for him, he had never acquired the taste for dissipation which had destroyed his brother, for opportunity had been lacking. It was not a question of moral principle at all. And now, although he did not know it, would not have believed it had he been told, he was in a position of the utmost danger. Without any home ties, with no religious convictions, nothing to safeguard him from ruin, he might easily have sunk; but he had no physical inclination for the destroying vices, having never been tempted.

At this juncture he was standing one day watching a busy little knot of porters loading up packages of hardware from a warehouse into a couple of heavy waggons. The swiftness and apparent eagerness with which they did their work, without any appearance of being driven, appealed to him, and unconsciously his

face took on a wistful expression—he would so much have liked to be one of that busy band. A keen-eyed, pleasant-faced man of middle age, who stood in the doorway with a book in his hand making certain entries, caught sight of the waiting, earnest-looking man. And being of an imaginative, romantic turn of mind (which, scoff at the idea as you may, is almost essential to the making of a successful business man), he began in a side alley of his brain to build up a theory concerning this evidently country-bred young fellow who was watching manual labour being carried on with such manifest desire to take part in it. Moreover, the owner of the warehouse, for it was he, was a kindly Christian, whose interest in all men, but specially his own employés, was proverbial in Chicago—that humming hive of business that contains so much that is evil, but, thank God, has also so much that is pre-eminently good.

Will began to move away slowly, but Mr. Schermer made half-a-dozen swift strides after him, and tapping him smartly upon the shoulder, said, 'Say, young man, are you looking for work?' 'I am, sir,' Will replied smartly. 'Then come right in here, and I'll start you at once. I'm wanting a young fellow of your build pretty bad.' And in ten minutes Will felt that he was on the high road to fortune. Plenty of work, not difficult to learn, good thews and muscle to do it, and a hearty, appreciative man at the head of things ; he was delighted. More by a turn of Fortune's wheel than any design discoverable by man, Will had fallen into just the place he needed, where not only did he receive fair play, but where the employer kept ever before himself the fact

that each of his men was an individual soul for whom Christ died, and not just the cog of a machine ; where the employer shouldered his responsibility for his men as he did the bills he endorsed, and with just the same absence of consciousness that he was doing anything more than his obvious duty. No one praised him for meeting his bills as they fell due ; why should they praise him for considering the men who were serving him faithfully, and all the more faithfully because they knew full well that their employer had their interests at heart as well as his own—nay, that he regarded their interests and his as inseparable ?

I must leave Will here, under the most favourable conditions, to push his manful way up the ladder of prosperity, and to preserve, if he can, a measure of humility with it all, in that it was his lot to fall into good hands without any seeking of his own. Also I have a half-guilty feeling that this has been a prosy old chapter, quite at variance with the strain of high adventure which I have endeavoured to maintain throughout the rest of the book. And now we must return to Priscilla.

## CHAPTER XII

### REPAIRING DAMAGES

THE old *Grampus*, all unknowing of the hopes and fears and aches and pains she bore, rolled uneasily throughout that terribly long night. To tell the exact truth, she was often left entirely to herself, existing only by the good will of the elements or any passing ship. In much the same condition as the remnant of a beaten army, whose outposts, weary to death, fall down and sleep weltering in mud and blood because poor human nature has said her last word, the broken mate lay sleeping, his fractured leg, benumbed from heel to thigh, straightened out, and his utterly worn-out body not disturbing it by a single movement. The battered men below in the stifling reek of the foc'sle also lay asleep (blessed be God for sleep and death), utterly unconscious of their woes. The shipkeepers, whom a sense of duty kept, desperate as their need was, from sleeping too long at one spell, lay in uncouth attitudes about the moonlit deck. Occasionally one of them would rise and aimlessly rove aft to the binnacle, gaze into its glittering oval with eyes that distinguished not North from South, and then with another owl-like glance aloft would stagger forward and tumble down asleep again. And the missing ones, six stalwart men who

yesterday morning were each a centre of activity and private hopes, desires, and possibilities? At any rate their rest would be long and sound.

Priscilla woke about midnight, and looked uneasily about her. The almost stifling atmosphere of the tiny cabin, the reek of the lamp, and the innumerable exhalations from below, made the place almost unbearable. And as with a feeling of nausea overpowering her she surveyed her prison, there came to her, like a voice from a previous life, the most vivid recollection possible of the sweet breath stealing over the fields of her old home; of the careless days when singing she went about her household work; of the many delights brought by the changing seasons, each with its own particular charm; yes, even the hard, bitter winters when all the land was held in a grip of steel, and only amusement, out of doors, seemed possible. That seemed to her like a glimpse of paradise, from which, by her own act and because she did not value its joys, she had been shut out: she had exchanged it for this. And her eyes filled, her heart swelled with self-pity, regret, repentance, until suddenly a hoarse murmur by her side resolved itself into: 'Pris, whar air ye?'

Immediately she was recalled to present realities. Swift as thought she had asked and received strength, and leaning over her helpless husband, she said, quite tenderly, 'Yes, dear, I am here. What can I do for you?' Apparently ignoring her gentle question, he muttered savagely but disconnectedly, 'What's th' matter? whar's everybody? what's doin'? call th' mate.' I do not see any necessity for indicating the stream of fantastic blasphemies which followed,

apparently to emphasise his demand for information. They made her shrink, as does a delicate skin upon meeting a cold blast ; but as soon as she was able she said, ' The mate has been badly hurt, Ramon, but I can call the second mate if you will. He can explain so much better than I can what has happened.' ' Well, whyn't yew call him, then ? Kain't ye see, yo' pulin' idiot, 'at I want t' know—t' *know*, d' ye hear ? ' More horrible emphasis, in the midst of which Priscilla crept from the cabin, and, going to the companion, rung a little handbell, an agreed signal for summoning the steward. That worthy man was lapped in profoundest slumber by the side of the galley, but at almost the first tinkle of the little bell he sprang to his feet, and, hastening to the companion, listened breathlessly to his mistress's orders (he called them so, but they sounded more like entreaties).

As soon as he understood them he departed, and returning in two minutes announced to Priscilla that he had succeeded in arousing the second mate, who was coming immediately. Receiving Priscilla's instructions to keep handy in case she wanted anything, he retired to the lee-side of the skylight and waited. In about a minute the second mate appeared, still heavy with sleep (the deep sleep of utter exhaustion from which he had been aroused), and lumberingly made his way down into the darksome cabin. Tapping gently at the skipper's state-room door, he was greeted with a torrent of oaths, and understood that if he didn't hurry in nameless consequences awaited him. Trembling in every limb, he instantly obeyed, and presently stood beside his commander's couch like

an utterly abject coward. Yet he was, as we have seen, nothing less than a hero. His deeds on the preceding day were those of a man who counted the preservation of his own life but a very little thing, if haply he might save some of his shipmates from death. In the midst of those aggressive monsters he did not quail, but led his men on to deeds as noble as any that have ever been recorded—yet here he stood abashed and quivering before a helpless man morally as much his inferior as it was possible for a man to be. Mystery of mysteries, and one that men have never yet taken sufficient account of, even with the stupendous object-lesson of that utterly contemptible animal, but supereminent commander of men, Napoleon, before their eyes. The meanest soldier of Napoleon's armies was a greater hero than he; but the possession of that awful power of domination enabled this utter egotist, this unutterable cad, to rule Europe and send to sordid deaths rejoicingly hundreds of thousands of men, most of whom were in a moral and physical sense immeasurably superior to himself.

Thus Mr. Winslow stood before his skipper, who, glaring up at him with an expression of fiercest contempt in his black eyes, demanded of him why he had not reported before the doings of that disastrous day. Falteringly, as if personally to blame for the skipper's incapability of receiving any information before, Mr. Winslow began his melancholy narration. His nervousness, coupled with a most excusable desire to make the best account he could of an exceedingly bad job, caused him at times to be almost unintelligible, and subjected him to the

fiercest abuse from the skipper. But this incitement had one good effect. It tended to brevity of account, and in ten minutes there was little left to tell. For a moment or two after he ceased speaking there was a dead silence, through which the ceaseless wash of the watchful waves outside against the topsides could be felt rather than heard.

Then suddenly the skipper spoke again. ‘Spose ye’re all hard at it repairin’ damages, hey?’ ‘Well, sir,’ stammered the officer, ‘ye see, sir——’ ‘Give *me* none o’ yer lyin’ backin’ an’ fillin’, y’ lazy hog, ‘r I’ll——’ He got no further. All Mr. Winslow’s manhood came to his assistance, breaking through the mysterious bonds that had held him so long. With all his nervousness gone, he made one stride nearer the skipper, a dangerous light gleamed in his blue eyes, and he said: ‘Stop right thar, Cap’n Da Silva. Ther’ ain’t a man aboard this ship but wut’s done his duty like a man, an’ no one could ha’ done any better. We’re all nearly dead with fightin’ fag, all ‘cept me sleepin’ w’ere we fell down, an’ some of us is broke up so in body ‘at it’ll be months before we’re fit again. An’ you dare t’ lie there ‘n’ speak t’ me ov lyin’ and laziness. Say it again, an’ jes’ s if yew wuz any other varmint I’ll choke th’ life outen ye where ye lie.’ He wound up with a terrible oath. But Priscilla rose and confronted him, her grave eyes looking unnaturally large in the whiteness of her face. ‘Go on deck, Mr. Winslow,’ she said; ‘you forget yourself. The Captain is very ill and irritable, and cannot be held responsible for what he says.’ Without a word the second mate bowed his head and departed, leaving her alone to face the fiendish

malice of her husband, who, as soon as his officer had departed, turned upon her and exhausted even his perverted ingenuity in abuse.

Strange to say, this bad exercise seemed to improve his bodily condition, for in about an hour, during which Priscilla waited on him with the utmost care and in as perfect a silence as if she were stone deaf to his shameful words, he ordered her to assist him to dress. When she had done so he staggered to the state-room door, rudely thrusting aside her proffered arm, and dragged himself on deck. As soon as he was gone from the room she prayed with all her heart on her lips for peace, filled with pity for the poor men above now that their tyrant was unloosed again. A hoarse cry of pain sent a thrill of sympathy through her, but she *would* not be distressed, believing that in some way she would have a satisfying answer to her prayer.

On deck the skipper, his cold heart full of malicious intent, had stumbled over the body of the steward lying by the side of the cabin skylight, and kicking savagely at the prostrate man had aroused him to an immediate sense of his peril. Scrambling to his feet, the frightened black man was slinking below, when the hoarse command of the skipper to 'Come here' arrested him, and he obeyed with shaking knees. 'Whar's the helmsman?' demanded the Captain. 'I d' no, sah,' pleaded the steward. 'I'll go see, sah.' 'Stop right whar y' air, will ye?' was the fierce answer, and in the dim light of the binnacle the steward saw the skipper's hand go to his hip-pocket, produce something that glittered, and immediately a couple of shots rang out startlingly through the quiet night.

At that dread summons men began to appear from all around, first of them all the second mate, with wild inquiry in his eyes. 'Mr. Winslow,' snarled the skipper, whose voice was growing stronger with each word he spoke, 'call all hands t' make sail. A hand t' th' wheel at once.' By this time all those who were able to do so had mustered, and with the instinctive habit of obedience, as if all recollection of their recent interview had disappeared from his mind, the second mate replied in his usual tone, 'Aye, aye, sir,' then roaring, 'All hands make sail, loose taups'ls 'n t'gallants'ls fore and aft. Clear away stays'ls, jib, 'n' spanker. Naow git a move on yerselves, d'ye hear?'

There was a rush to obey, for all felt somehow that their brief season of relief from the skipper's oversight had come to an end, and as they disappeared in different directions with their old frantic haste, the skipper said to the second mate in a voice that could not be overheard by any other: 'See hyar, Mr. Winslow, fur what yew said to me to-night I'll pay ye full price an' interest, ef it takes me all this voy'ge. But fur now yew go scot free 'cause I need yer assistance, 'n' I hain't goin' t' hev enny limejuicer rot of bullyin' my officers 'fore the men an' destroyin' disciplin'. Only ef thar's enny sign ov ye playin' it on me, wall, yew'll hev to shoot quick 'r yew'll be a goner. I'm heeled an' I'm watchin' fur ye.' Again the second mate replied steadily, 'Aye, aye, sir,' and almost instantly after his shouts of 'Sheet home fore taups'l, sheet home mizen taups'l, histe away stays'ls,' &c., made the solemn night hideous.

A low groan a little forward of where the skipper

stood caused him to move that way, and, stooping, he found the mate, who had been aroused to a miserable consciousness of bone-wrenching pain by the clamour around him. Stooping towards him, the skipper said in a grating tone, 'Wall, 'n' wut's wrong with yew? Whyn't yew gettin' abaout yer dooties? Pretty fine condition yew've let the ship git into in a few days.' Pausing as if for a reply, and receiving none, the skipper went on, 'What in thunder yew lyin' thar fur? Don't ye know it's "all hands"?' 'Kain't move, sir,' came slowly from the mate's parched lips, as if dragged thence by torture, 'fur me right arm an' leg seem 's if they wuz one big pain. Fact, I seem to be all raw on thet side of me. *Kain't* I hev a drink o' water, sir?' 'Wall, I guess yew kin. Here, boy!' to one of the younger men hastening across the deck, 'give the mate a drink of water, an' look slippy.' The skipper looked on while the unfortunate man drank as if his poor throat had been a bed of unslaked lime. Then he said, 'I guess yew wun't du any wuss till daylight, 'n' I'll be all th' better fit to see wut kin be done with ye. But yew've made a hell ov a mess ov th' cruise, naow, ain't ye?' The sufferer drew in his breath sharply as this mental blow was added to all his physical sufferings, but he did not—indeed, he could not—answer. The merciful climax of suffering was reached, the broken human machinery protested vainly to the surcharged brain, and Mr. Court, relapsing into blessed insensibility, passed into a place where neither the malignity of man nor the liabilities of the body could trouble him.

The Captain strode away muttering until he stood

by the wheel and gazed into the face of the compass. He was revolving in his mind the possibilities of fetching the Cape Verde Islands, as they were now on the edge of the Doldrums, those neutral latitudes between the trade winds that are such a sore trial to the patience of sailing-ship masters. Only a gentle zephyr was stirring, like the last breath of the departing N.E. trade winds, and it was rather a serious question to decide whether to struggle eastward to Brava, or keep on southward, doing all the repairs possible until reaching Rio de Janeiro. One thing only was needed to turn the scale—the personal touch. And it availed. He knew the place so well ; although he had not been born there, much of his youth had been spent there, and he was sure not only of getting a few fresh hands who would be devoted to himself, but there would not be the faintest opportunity given for any one of his remaining crew to desert. So he gave a muttered order to the helmsman, followed by a shout of 'Square away the mainyard,' as the old ship fell off the wind. With his usual skill and alertness he conned her as she slowly wore round on to the port tack, and to his grim satisfaction he found that she would head a little to the northward of east, and that the breeze was even then freshening a little.

By this time the whole of the available canvas had been set, and the men were busy coiling up the gear. Again the skipper called Winslow to him, and in a quiet, passionless tone gave him certain orders concerning the repairing of damage that would keep all hands busy for some time to come. Then the carpenter and cooper were summoned, and each received a few vitriolic remarks concerning their

so-called laziness, coupled with a warning that before long they would have paid very dearly for the advantage they had taken of his helplessness. Moreover, he told them that, being now quite well again, he was fully prepared to keep them at their work, if he had to do it at the mouth of a revolver. They stood perfectly silent and submissive, neither attempting the faintest justification of himself, and when dismissed with the contemptuous remark, 'Naow git t' hell eout er this, an' do some work,' they turned and slunk away like beaten curs. Both were Americans of the best type, both were splendid workmen of middle age, with whose way of performing their duties it would seem utterly impossible to find any fault, and yet both endured such utterly undeserved and blistering contumely as this without a word, and, what is more, without a thought of retaliation. So well had they been trained in whaleship ways.

Thus having resumed the reins of power in altogether vigorous fashion, and reasserted his ability to make himself feared as well as obeyed fore and aft, the skipper went below, growling as he passed the helmsman, 'Naow jes' keep her full an' bye, an' ef I hear anythin' shakin', by —— I'll shake *yew*, till y' don' know whether *yew're* dead 'r alive.' The man replied cheerfully in the stereotyped phrase, 'Aye, aye, sir,' relieved beyond measure to find that he should be free of the presence of his enemy for a little while, at any rate.

The skipper's first action on getting below was to send for the steward by ringing his bell, and on the darkey's immediate appearance to order some food and coffee to be prepared for himself. Of his wife

he took not the slightest heed. Then going to his medicine-chest he took out the little book of simple instructions in surgery and medicine that is always part of the furniture of a ship's medicine-chest, and, seating himself at the cabin table, with one hand fiercely tugging at his black beard, he began to study the chapter on setting broken limbs. A sardonic smile twitched upwards the corners of his mouth as he imagined how the poor mate would suffer. There was just a glint of pleasure in the thought lighting the otherwise beclouded horizon of his mind. When he had settled to his own satisfaction the course of his operations upon his mate (fancy learning to set a broken arm and leg in an hour !), he sulkily called to his wife, 'Here, you, git me some bandages ready, an' be quick abaout it.' She, watching for his lightest word, came on the instant, and quietly asked how long and how wide he wanted them. Even this essential question seemed to afford him an opportunity of venting more of his spleen upon her, but wearying of that soon (indeed, he was as yet far from strong), he supplied the information, and went on with his studies. Then lying down upon the transom locker he composed himself to sleep, well satisfied with his watches work.

On deck the ship hummed like a hive. Even the men who had been so badly bruised that the most elementary exercise of humanity would have allowed them to rest, dragged themselves wearily up out of the forecastle, and did whatever they could do towards the general refitment which was going on. Some were hoisting on deck coils of 'tow-line,' the beautiful rope which is fastened to the harpoons;

others were taking the superfluous turns out of it, and stretching it by passing it through a block as high as the topgallant crosstrees, and coiling it again and again the reverse way of the lay. Others, again, were fitting harpoons to poles, and securing to them their bridles of tow-line ; others were doing the same to lances, or putting keen edges on new weapons. Several, under the carpenter's orders, were working away at the repairing of the one boat which had been picked up, sawing timbers and planks, and carefully unriveting broken knees from splintered skin. Two men were assisting the cooper to make new line-tubs. And amidst it all Mr. Winslow moved alert, with eyes like a cat's, unhindered by the encompassing darkness, but for all that earnestly desirous of the day.

Unto these toilers at last came the blessing of light, bringing with it a certain satisfaction, as it always does, to those who have been working in the dark, but also sadly associated with the idea that the skipper would soon be on deck among them. Every now and then one of them would glance furtively aft in search of his dreaded appearance, and, relieved temporarily by the assurance that he was not yet among them, would renew energetically his efforts to accomplish his task. Suddenly all hands were startled by his voice, all its old vigour having returned, shouting, 'Mr. Winslow.' The second mate immediately hurried aft, and saying inquiringly, 'Yes, sir,' awaited his orders. 'Clear away the carpenter's bench, an' bring it aft here !' snarled the Captain. 'Pedro, Bibra, come here.' The carpenter's bench having been placed on the fore side of the

skylight, athwart the deck, the steward made his appearance, carrying the bandages and certain bottles, also some pieces of rough but thin boards, just portions of canned meat cases with the nails drawn, split to necessary narrowness, and cut in proper lengths. At an order from the Captain, the two Portuguese harpooners lifted the still insensible body of the mate on to the bench, and began to bare his broken limbs, a most difficult task, owing to their having become glued to the clothing with dried blood.

This operation roused him at once from his stupor, and with groans that shook his whole frame his glazed eyes opened. He muttered feebly, 'For God's sake go easy : ain't I sufferin' enough?' But a glance at the skipper showed these rough attendants that, even had they been inclined to yield to the mate's prayer, and 'go easy,' they dare not, so, disregarding his agony, they persevered, and after dragging and slitting and soaking his clothes, succeeded at last in exposing the leg and arm, each with fragments of bone protruding through the torn and swollen flesh. By the time this had been done the mate could only feebly gasp, 'Water ! water !' and the steward, with a fearful glance at the skipper for permission, put a pannikin full to his cracked lips. Then with a corner of the towel he carried he was about to wipe the sweat from the mate's drawn face, but an execration from the skipper caused him to scuttle back into his place like a frightened rabbit.

The operation began, and really it is questionable whether the utter callousness and brutality of the operator were not more merciful to the sufferer than

the tender, half-afraid manipulations of a kind-hearted and unskilful man would have been. For in any case much pain had to be endured, and, as I have before noted, the human body can only feel a certain amount. When that has been borne, whatever you may have to endure does not matter in the least as far as your consciousness of it goes. It is a comforting thought when reading of the infliction of ancient tortures. So now, before the mangled arm had been straightened, the fragments of bone drawn within the swollen muscles, the mate had again lapsed into insensibility. The attendants glanced fearfully at the white, set face, and from it to the scowling visage of the skipper, but dared not utter their fears that the patient was dead. The operator worked on with a skill amazing to see in one who had never performed such an operation before, nor had ever seen such a thing done. Without again referring to his book, without a moment's hesitation, he placed the splints, passed the bandages, saturated them with carbolic lotion, and then, having satisfied himself that, in spite of the ghastly appearance of the mate's side, it was only an extensive superficial laceration—there were no ribs broken—he ordered the two harpooners to carry the patient to a mattress placed for his reception on the after corner of the deck behind the tiller, and leave him there. The steward was given orders to keep an eye on him, and feed him occasionally with a little soup and bread, and again the skipper retired below.

By this time the meal-hour had arrived—eight bells—and a brief respite from their labours was enjoyed by all hands. The day was fair and bright,

the wind was steady at about north, and the old ship was making good progress. So Mr. Winslow sent everybody but the helmsman to breakfast, and himself came aft and sat beside his brother officer, full of pity, but oppressed by his own utter inability to do anything for him. But he had the satisfaction of noting how well the work of repairing the broken limbs had been done, and, as he was thinking how even the worst of men sometimes compel our admiration, he was intensely gratified to see Mr. Court open his eyes and look wearily round. 'Wall, haow d' ye feel abaout it naow, sir?' said he earnestly. The mate stifled a groan, and at last managed to reply, 'Winslow, I'd rather ten thousan' times 'a' died than ben thro' wut I've suffered this laest twenty-four hours. But I don't feel 's much pain 's I did, an' if only I k'n git a little food 'at I k'n eat I think I sh'll do. Ole man's awful mad, ain't he?' Bending his head close down, Winslow gave the mate a hurried outline of the proceedings since the skipper's return to command, and wound up by saying, 'He ain't said nawthin' abaout it, but I believe he's makin' fur Cape Verdes. We're carryin' all sail to th' eastward.' 'Thank God fur that,' murmured the mate; 'thar'll be some chance ov seein' a doctor if I need one by then. Say, Winslow, ef ye k'n git 'one o' th' fellows t' give an eye to me now an' then, I'll be glad.'

For all answer Winslow patted his cheek, and in response to the breakfast bell departed below. He and the mate, while respecting each other, had not been chums in any sense of the word, but the recent happenings had drawn them very close, this feeling

especially affecting Winslow. And he began to feel as if he could do anything, endure anything on the mate's behalf while he was so helpless—yes, even dare the risk of being shot by the skipper, if he should go too far in his calculated brutality.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CAPTAIN GOES ASHORE

FAVoured by exquisite weather, and trade-winds hanging well to the northward, the *Grampus* ploughed steadily along towards her objective, no one but the skipper knowing that it was Brava. After the first three days of almost frantic labour the skipper's experienced eye noted how stale the men had become; want of rest and poor food had reduced them so that threats and blows no longer goaded them; they were fast approaching that stage when nothing matters, and suffering least of all, because it had become a normal condition. So Captain Da Silva, being anything but a fool, 'let up' on them as he termed it, not because he considered their punishment at all adequate to the crime they had committed of being beaten in spite of having done their best, but because he needed their services in the future. He restored their regular watches, and although the amount of quite unnecessary work still carried on would have caused a mutiny in any British merchant ship, this crew chuckled to think what a good time they were now having. And, besides, their lives were not so devoid of interest, for there could be no doubt that they were bound to some anchorage—it did not matter much where—they

would see the land again and perhaps taste vegetables.

And the sorely wounded mate, despite the roughness of his treatment, the almost utter absence of nursing, steadily improved. His iron constitution, a certain ox-like patience, and the absence of drugs combined with perfectly pure air—all these helped to make his recovery marvellously rapid. But he almost had a relapse ten days after the accident. He had so far progressed as to be able to sit up upon an improvised little platform by the taffrail, and was watching the sea, when his dull eye suddenly brightened, his form stiffened, and lifting up his voice he raised the cry of 'Blow!' The skipper since the surgical operation had held no conversation with the injured man, except one or two of the briefest remarks passed each day, just what were absolutely necessary. But now he spun round on his heel, his black eyes flaming, and shouted, 'Whar away, Mr. Court? Aloft there! wut ye doin'? Kain't ye see 't all?' Springing up on the little hurricane deck peculiar to all whaleships, he at once caught sight of the whale, a big lone fellow, proceeding in leisurely fashion due south. Without apparently considering for one moment the fact that he had only two boats to use, he issued his orders, sharp and sudden like rifle-shots. Sail was shortened to the topsails, the vessel put upon the other tack; then, springing upon the starboard quarter, where the best boat hung, he shouted, 'Way boats!' sweeping contemptuously away the third mate, who of course was standing by to take his place in his regular craft. A whirring of the sheaves followed,

and down went the boat, striking the water fairly and being released at once with a smartness delightful to see. Then, grasping the dangling falls with one hand, the skipper turned to the mate, who lay fretting himself into a fever at his inability to move, saying as coolly as if just setting off for a pleasure trip, 'Guess yew k'n con th' ship whar y' air, Mr. Court, kain't ye?' 'Sure, sir,' murmured the mate, the prospect of being able to do something seeming delightful to him. No answer, but for a moment the skipper's body was outlined against the sky as he launched himself downwards, struck the boat, seized the steer oar, and issued his orders. Away flew both boats as if the lives of their crews depended upon their utmost speed.

Now, I do not wish to weary my readers with repeated accounts of whale-fights, and therefore I must omit all the circumstantial details of this one. But I do need to say that Captain Da Silva had apparently found exceeding compensation for his late tribulations in this opportune encounter, and he behaved as one possessed of a demon of destruction, to whom no mishap could possibly come. Yet he was by no means reckless. Every precaution that could be taken against disaster he took, but, on the other hand, he neglected no opportunity of rushing in whenever and wherever the slightest opening presented itself. Scorning bomb-lances, he used only the long primitive spear, and with fiendish howls he ordered the second mate to keep aloof in readiness to aid in case of accident. The whale, evidently an old hand at the game, tried every ruse known to whales, but in vain, for, rolling over towards the

oncoming boat, and sinking his body in the middle in order to get a grip of the boat with his gaping jaws, he felt suddenly the diamond-shaped head of a lance gliding through the thick muscles of his throat downward to his mighty heart. Six feet from that searching point the captain leaned his shoulder upon the lance-butt, lending all his great strength to the thrust. The boat passed to the other side of the body. 'Pull ahead all!' yelled the skipper, and out drew the steel, distorted to the likeness of a conventional lightning flash. 'Pull all!' again yelled the skipper, and in response the boat shot away from the vast writhing body, so fatally pierced that in three minutes, with a few gigantic convulsions, it lay still, dead.

Again the voice of the skipper arose—no note of triumph in it, no suggestion of rest for his crew. 'Hull in thet line, lively naow. Hyar yew,' to the after oarsman, 'histe thet wheft' (small blue signal flag) "'n' wave fur th' secon' mate t' come up.' So they hauled up alongside of the whale and cut the line from the harpoon, by which time Mr. Winslow, who had kept close to the fight all the time, was also alongside. 'Naow,' shouted the skipper to him, 'git thet fluke-rope passed 's if ye knew haow, an' be ready with yer eend to pass aboard when I come. Pull two, starn three, so, all together,' and away shot the boat towards the ship, which was coming down towards them at a fine rate. So fast, indeed, did the two craft draw together, that barely ten minutes had elapsed from the time the skipper's boat left the whale until he was again on board and, hoisting his boat, was issuing his orders as if he were an engineer

handling the cranks, levers, and throttle-valves of his engines. Now he was in his element—now he felt the primal delight of power—to rule his fellows and bend to his moulding will. The whale was not large as regards bulk, but full of fatness—so full, indeed, that the utmost care must needs be exercised lest the hoisting gear should tear out of the almost rotten blubber. The operations were conducted in peerless fashion, the skipper being apparently the mind of all hands—his late disablement appeared to have given him an impetus that none of his previous experiences had supplied. So great, indeed, was he that muttering passed from man to man after this fashion : ‘Oh, but he’s a horse, ain’t he?’ ‘Don’t he do it?’ ‘What a man he is!’ &c.

The work of securing the spoil was carried on with such vigour, such exquisite skill, and due apportionment of labour, that before the day was closed all the worst of the duty was done, and the skipper strode proudly the scanty limits of his quarter-deck with the mien of a man who could not possibly learn from any a better way of doing his work. And, as I have already noted, he had also earned the intense admiration of all hands, although each one of those men was aching from head to heel with the extraordinary strain put upon him.

And Priscilla? Well, she had not suffered. She had learnt to wait in patience the outcome of all things—not to be distressed by strange noises as of strife, or no less strange interludes of silence, when it seemed as if everyone but herself was dead. Even when upon the deep quiet (as of the grave) which enwrapped her there impinged a great noise, she did

not shrink or shudder : she just looked up and was comforted. That she should have been thus becalmed, as it were, in the midst of tempests, that to her wilful, wayward heart should have come so bountiful a measure of the Divine patience, will naturally seem incredible to many—quite as great a miracle as the raising of the widow's son. But, thank God ! there are also many of us who know that such miracles are daily wrought by the direct interposition of God. Sometimes man is honoured by being the instrument in such cases, but more often they are the outcome of an answer given by the trembling, tired soul out into the darkness whence comes the comforting, still small voice.

When at last the skipper came down he wore all the self-conferred honours of a successful tyrant. He had vindicated his position as the one man who could do things without making mistakes, who could be depended upon to come upon the scene when disaster seemed imminent, and, taking the helm of affairs, conduct them triumphantly to victory. And the knowledge was almost too much for him. He strode into his state-room and flung his orders at Priscilla much as if she had been a negro slave—with little distinction between her and the steward. And she, with calmest demeanour, obeyed him to the foot of the letter. She gave him no cause of complaint, and to his intense surprise he found himself looking furtively at her and wondering how it was she did not cry or protest or do something, anything except act like one whom nothing could make unhappy or disobedient. At last he could no longer endure the spur of his curiosity, and he said, in strangely subdued tones (the steward

having gone on deck), 'Wut's th' matter with ye, Pris? Ain't feelin' sick, air ye? Yer lookin' kinder curis, y' know.' She turned her calm face to him and said, 'No, Ramon; I'm feeling very well, thank you. Is there anything more I can do for you?' He did not answer. For his keen Latin wits had come up against something that was quite outside of his experience. Something of the baffled rage of the early persecutors possessed him as he realised that his wife had passed into a region from which he was quite shut out. So he hurled a savage curse, a farrago of Portuguese blasphemy, at her, which sounded like the rattling of manacles, and passed on deck again.

Remember, if you would blame Priscilla for not trying to win this bad man, that she knew him, knew that any language she might use would be utterly unintelligible to him, knew that his long and successful career of cruelty had hardened in him all the baser attributes, and she felt it would be hopeless to try. She felt, too, that she would only be bringing more suffering down upon herself, and was not at all confident as to the limit of her endurance. She was wrong, of course: she had not a sufficiently ample idea of the power of God to save. But we dare not blame her: many of us in her position would have gone mad. And she did pray for him, but without the faintest belief that her prayer would be answered. She felt, as Mr. Moody once expressed it, as if when she prayed for that man the heavens above her were as brass, that prayers on his behalf could not ascend.

So the *Grampus* sped onward towards Brava under the most favourable conditions possible. The work of securing the spoil of the whale was carried

through in marvellous fashion ; the wind held true to the north, even sometimes a point to the westward of north, and freshened enough to give the old ship a speed, rap-full, of five knots an hour. Whether it was any anticipation of meeting old acquaintances (a man like that never has friends) or not, the skipper, too, was certainly less severe than usual in his treatment of his men. He even condescended to inquire occasionally after the health of his mate, who was doing wonderfully well in the pure air and utter lack of all medicine, aided by his splendid constitution. So well, indeed, did the old ship progress, that by the time she had been restored to her ordinary condition of spotless cleanliness, the beautiful outlines of the islands were sighted, and all hands, with quickened pulse-beats, began to look forward to a little change in the ordered monotony of their lives. But great was their disappointment when they found that, instead of going as closely in as was safe, the Captain anchored his ship in thirty fathoms of water—far out to sea. And without the loss of an hour he ordered his boat to be manned (by Portuguese only), and, dressed like a bridegroom, mounted the rail preparatory to descending. The second mate stood near ; the mate listened from the corner aft, where he sat helpless, with painful earnestness for any word the skipper might drop of his intentions.

‘See here, Mr. Winslow,’ drawled the skipper, ‘ye’ll keep the men at work, watch on watch, same’s at sea. Yew’ll keep a bright look-out for me comin’ back, as I shall be ’fore long, anyway. An’ if anythin’ happens ’at ye want me sudden, set the ensign at the peak.’ And without another word he was

gone, and his boat's crew, with the splendid stroke of the trained American whaleman, was making the pretty craft fly towards the shore, its captain standing erect in the stern, handling his steer-oar, like a figure of stone. The second mate watched him out of definition range, then, descending from the rail with a sigh, he sought the mate, saying, 'Well, Mr. Court, whut ye think of him? Ain't he a daisy? I really dunno haow it es, but th' wuss he is th' more I admire at him, until his back's turned, 'n' then I want t' kill him. An,' dropping his voice, 'd' jever before in a 'Merican ship see a lady treated like this one? I have stood, I k'n stand, a good deal frum him, but if ever he raises his hand t' thet poor broken-hearted woman when I'm erroun' I'm goin' t' kill him right in his tracks—naow, yew hear me!' 'Oh, shet yer head!' fretfully replied the mate. 'I know all abaout thet; wut's th' use er chawin' it over? What I wunt t' know is, wut sort of a gang of dagoes is he goin' t' bring with him. All his own relations, I suppose, 'n' thar'll be the usual amount er spyin' an' lyin' an' devilishness generally. If only I had this leg 'n' arm o' mine usable! I ben thinkin' over a good many things sense I ben a-laying here, I tell ye, but I got one idea solid, 'n' that is thet, live er die, I'm a-goin' t' stand up t' him an' whoever he brings aboard here, an' hev' my rights as mate. You, too, I know, Winslow; but only as man to man; no hatchin' anything' or conspirin'. We'll leave that to them. But I do wish we could help the poor woman.'

'Thank you, friends,' said Priscilla, who had glided on deck and overheard the last portion of the mate's remarks. 'It's very good of you to think

about me, but I shall be grateful if you will behave as if I were not on board. I cannot, must not, be a source of trouble, and, moreover, the Captain is my husband. Now don't, please don't, think of helping me, as you call it, any more. I've got help of the best kind always available. I didn't know I had until a short time ago. I'd forgotten God, as it seems to me God *is* forgotten at sea. But when I was ready to go mad with what I thought was my undeserved trouble, He came to my rescue, and now I feel I can bear anything. And, anyhow, what is my trouble compared with yours? Ah, Mr. Court, I have felt so much for you in your awful pain, and not to be able to help you at all. Are you in pain now?' 'Oh, no, ma'am, thank you kindly,' murmured the mate; 'that's all over and done with. Anyhow, it was never quite as bad as you might think. Sounds a good deal worse than it is. I'm hurt more at havin' to lie here doin' nothin' than by any pain I've got.' 'Well, I'm glad to hear you say so. Now I must go down. I feel that I'm doing wrong sitting up here talking to you, as I should certainly not be doing if my husband were here.' And she departed below, leaving the two mates, with a totally new set of sensations, staring at each other dumbly.

Unfortunately, mischief had been done. One of the Portuguese sailors had been ostensibly occupied in renewing the seizings on the mizen shrouds, but for the last ten minutes he had devoted all his faculties to listening. Vainly; he did not know enough of the language to take in the conversation, but he knew that the Captain's wife had been talking for a long time to the two mates. And he deter-

mined that the knowledge should not be wasted. The two officers, so deeply interested were they, did not notice this man, and when presently the second mate almost guiltily resumed his oversight of the men and their work he did not even see Lazzaro furtively glancing at him from the mizen rigging. No more was said by either of the mates or Mrs. Da Silva on the subject, and the work of the ship went on throughout the day with something of its old machine-like regularity. Night fell, and still no sign of the skipper. With deepening distrust and anxiety the officer saw the watches set, attending to every detail of his duties with the utmost fidelity, and reporting at eight o'clock all his doings to the mate. Mr. Court sent a respectful message to Priscilla on hearing this, acquainting her with the condition of affairs and assuring her that she had no cause for alarm. She would receive instant attention to her lightest wish, and probably the Captain would be aboard before morning. And so, quietly enough to all outward seeming, but with much anxiety among the afterguard, the night passed away.

Ashore the Captain was having what sailors term a mighty good time. Congenial spirits awaited him of both sexes, long known to him, and, flinging aside all the restraints he felt he had been bound by during the last year, he plunged into the wildest excesses. He was one of those men to whom such an outburst, even at very long intervals, seems a necessity of life—one that when the opportunity for obtaining it arrives can by no effort of will be refrained from, although it is hard to suppose that such an effort is ever made or attempted. And yet he could

be, as far as abstention from vulgar vice was concerned, a very eremite for a year at a time, otherwise he would never have reached his present position ; for the American shipowner—or, indeed, employer of any kind—is entirely intolerant of drunkenness or debauchery among his servants, and will have none of it if by any means he can prevent it. Now, however, his boat's crew disposed of—allowed to run a little riot of their own among their cronies, and merely ordered to turn up in the morning at eight o'clock, bringing six recruits with them, he abandoned himself to the fierce delights of the Latin seaman when let loose.

But in spite of the long night's excesses there was little alteration in his appearance or manner when he met his men in the morning, noting with high approval that they had succeeded in obtaining the new hands he wanted : six huge piratical-looking ruffians, three of whom were of that peculiar type of Portuguese which can only be found in the islands of the North-West Atlantic—men, that is, with the high-bred facial characteristics of the Portuguese allied to a perfect blackness of skin. Some of these men are of great size, and almost all of them know something about sperm-whaling, since all of these islands were for hundreds of years most prolific haunts of the cachalot. Therefore they have always been welcomed as recruits for whaleships, their undoubted courage and great powers of endurance adding to their desirability. But to Captain Da Silva they represented more than these advantages. They were his own countrymen, and might be relied upon to abet him in any scheme of devilry he might devise, in which he would certainly lack the support of his American officers. And a

dim idea of vengeance upon those officers was certainly taking shape within his mind, which, once definitely arranged, he would spare no pains to carry out nor allow any peevish scruples to prevent him doing so.

With a few quiet words to the newcomers about pay, position, &c., also the time of meeting to make the engagement—a very simple matter in those ships—he gave them some money, and went his way to purchase three new whale-boats. In this he was also fortunate, for a local bay whaling company had just dissolved partnership, and all their gear was on sale. He succeeded in purchasing from the representative of the late company four boats and a large quantity of gear for less than half their ordinary value, which pleased him so much that he determined to stay another night ashore and continue his enjoyment. But first he made arrangements for his new purchases to be taken off to the ship. The only message he condescended to send was that the boat should return for him the next day at 10 A.M. And not an ounce of fresh meat or fruit or vegetables went off. These articles were cheap enough in all conscience, but Captain Da Silva never pampered his crew, especially thus early in a long voyage, and, besides, there was punishment to be carried out. And no form of punishment on board ship as applied to a whole crew is more effective than to be anchored near a fruitful shore after months of bad salt food and be denied a taste of the delicious things they can almost see growing. Under ordinary conditions such a deprivation would be next to impossible, as there are always people along shore anxious to earn a little by catering for the needs

of a ship's company, except in the most savage lands. And if there be no money on board, barter can always be resorted to: quite a quantity of sweet potatoes, oranges, or bananas can be obtained for a shirt. The Captain, however, had arranged all that; according to his wishes not a boat had been near his ship. And, besides, she was a long way out.

When the officers saw the gear and boats, and received the message, they looked at each other significantly, but said no word. Mr. Court, now able to hobble about, took charge of operations, and in quite a short time the newly acquired boats had been placed in position, had each received a coat of white paint, that being the colour of the *Grampus*'s boats, their gear fitted to them, and everything made ready for their lowering to a whale. They came alongside at midday, and by nightfall were ready for use. During all this activity Priscilla had been quite forgotten. The officers felt doubtful how she would receive any information about her husband which, in answer to questions, they might have felt tempted to supply, so they did not mention the matter. Only the genial darkey steward, in the perfectly respectful yet familiar manner common to negro servants in America, chatted away to his mistress, and kept her from being too lonely or dwelling too much upon the unknown reasons which had induced her husband to leave her on board the ship for two days without giving her any information at all of his doings. Had she known it, she might have felt surprised that he had never so much as given her a thought. But she would hardly have been grieved at anything he did

now to her, having fortified her mind against the worst that could befall.

Punctually at the time appointed the boat arrived at the place ordered by the Captain, who almost immediately appeared, and gave orders for the transhipment to the boat of a number of cases. Altogether they made a heavy cargo for such a frail boat ; but whalers are most expert at this business, and effect transportation by means of these boats that seems impossible to any ordinary sailors. This done they shoved off, Captain Da Silva standing erect in the stern, his eyes fixed upon his ship, and noting detail after detail as they became visible. A frown, never entirely absent from his handsome face, deepened upon it as he failed to see any cause for complaint. She looked beautifully trim ; not a rope yarn out of its place, the weather-beaten patches on her side carefully touched up, the boats all bright with new paint, the three mastheads manned, and, as he came alongside, the mate at the gangway to receive him, and the crew all standing by the boat's falls ready to hoist her up the moment he should step on board.

As he put his foot on the rail, Mr. Court said, 'Good morning, sir.' But instead of replying, the Captain said, 'Whyn't ye git under weigh?' And without pausing for an answer shouted : 'Man th' windlass.' The cry was re-echoed all over the ship, and almost immediately nothing could be heard for the clatter of the pawls as the big windlass barrel revolved at top speed. 'Down frum aloft there an' loose sail, courses, taups'les, an' t'gallantsails,' again shouted the Captain. 'Lively naow ; think yer goin'

t' sit up thar an' sleep while th' ship's gittin' under weigh?' Oh, he was a hustler, was Captain Da Silva. In ten minutes from the time he came on board the boat's cargo was discharged, she was hoisted, the *Grampus* was under weigh, and pointing south for the resumption of the long and weary voyage. Then, and not till then, did the skipper condescend to say anything to his chief officer. He called him, and with a coldly sarcastic curl of his lip as he saw him hobbling aft on improvised crutches, he said, 'Anythin' t' report?' 'No, sir,' replied Mr. Court, 'cept that I've returned t' duty.' 'No need t' report *that*, anyhaow,' growled the skipper; 'I k'n use my eyes. But yew don't look pretty, 'n that's a fact. Mout's well hide yerself a bit longer, moun't ye? Hain't gut tired doin' nawthin', I'm sure.' 'See here, Captain Da Silva,' hissed the mate, 'you've gut th' whip hand now, I'll own, but if ever I git on equal terms with ye, all this 'll hev t' be settled fur.' 'Go, lie daown, dog,' muttered the Captain. 'I'll attend t' you an' all th' rest right along 'n' git all th' sleep I need too.' And the *Grampus* began to rise and fall gently to the incoming swell as the Captain went below.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AMONG RIGHT WHALES

WE left our hero Rube suffering in body but triumphant in soul, and also in perfect ignorance of the astounding change his behaviour was bringing about in all hands. I have always maintained that a Christian ship presents as near an approach to what most of us agree Heaven must be like as we can make on this side of the gate thereof. For look at the position ! The grosser forms of temptation are entirely absent, yet there is none of the selfish side of monasticism present. Men talk and laugh and work with their fellows amid the most glorious of all earthly surroundings—the pure, wide, bright ocean. There is no monotony, since every day brings diversified duties, and in hours of rest not needed for sleep there is an ever-changing panorama of glory present to the newly awakened eyes, drawing ever-deepening thankfulness from the regenerated heart. The thousand-and-one miseries and pettinesses that distract men ashore are absent. From the little world evil has departed—almost the knowledge of it, since there is no daily paper recording the never-ending succession of crimes.

Yes, it is an ideal state of existence, a sort of Happy Valley in the midst of the ocean, whence the trail of the serpent has been removed, and where the

community bask, unshadowed by sin, in the sunshine of God. Of course, it will be cynically remarked that this is a picture of perfection, unattainable, impossible. Well, it is nearly, but not quite. I have experienced something very near it, and I beg to submit that it was so idyllic that it could not be made a subject for cynical sarcasm, even by the editor of the *Freethinker*, if he only saw it in operation. It might be called right fruit of wrong belief; but I do not love paradoxes. I prefer to believe that men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

But I am doing an injustice to Reuben and his shipmates by interpolating my own meditations in their story. When the work of realising the spoil of their first whale had been finished, all hands felt that they had now served their apprenticeship—were now fully equipped for their work on board, whatever it might be. And in their watches below the men found a wondrous fund of conversational matter in the happenings of the past few days. But whenever they approached the subject of Rube's rescue of MacManus there was a perceptible lowering of the voice, an air of solemnity upon everybody, for they all felt that here was a man who, given opportunity, would have dived into hell itself if by so doing he might haply rescue a comrade. And that a comrade by no means specially dear to him, but just one of the many. The incident brought them a truer insight into the character of Christ than millions of sermons could have done. And in saying this I in no wise undervalue sermons. 'It hath pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' But the living example of faith's outcome,

a far-off and feeble imitation of Christ, carries us beyond the reach of argument, makes the most sceptical silent. Against it the waves of criticism beat in vain. Logic, with all its perverseness ; the scornful finger-pointing at the unfaithful professors ; the cavilling of the sticklers for formulated creeds—all, all are silenced or stopped ; and the splendour of Christ manifest in the flesh again, though it be but in the flesh of one of His humblest servants, overwhelms us.

But it must be confessed that Captain Hampden, even in the midst of his new-found peace of soul, had occasional fits of despondency when he realised how little progress the ship was making towards a prosperous voyage. Over six months had now elapsed and only one sperm-whale had been seen. Hope buoyed him, of course, but it was often deferred, and, consequently, though he maintained a cheery demeanour towards his officers his heart was becoming very sick. Going below into his lonely little cabin he would stand as if in deep thought, gazing into vacancy and wondering in some indefinite way how it was that he was so unfortunate this voyage. For he had the reputation of being a 'lucky' skipper who never stayed out all his legal time, and on several occasions so great had been his success that he had found no need to go out of the Atlantic Ocean. Twice, indeed, he had spent gloriously successful seasons on 'Coffin's Ground,' just a little south and west of the English Channel, finding there sperm-whale, so numerous and fat that he was inclined to wonder why it should ever be necessary to go farther afield. I could not help thinking of him last year, when, on my way to the Mediterranean in one of the crack P. and O. liners,

I heard the veteran captain tell a lady at dinner that there were hardly any whales now—they had been almost exterminated. I ventured to question his dictum, and we had rather an interesting discussion. But next morning he and I met on deck a little after daybreak, to find the ship gliding along at her usual seventeen knots through the midst of a school of sperm-whales of the largest size, extending to the horizon on both sides, and taking us an hour to get away from them.

Nothing of that kind, however, came in the way of the *Xiphias*. Day after day passed, lengthening into weeks, during which from the lofty eminence of the crow's-nest nothing could be seen but sea and sky, an occasional barnacle-encrusted piece of drift-timber, a school of dolphin or bonito, a few porpoises, flying fish innumerable, and now and then a fin-back whale. But with the exception of the skipper nobody seemed to worry or find the life monotonous. Work went on with clock-like regularity, but outside of the work the men's lives appeared to be full of interest. Interminable yarns, often inconsequential, were exchanged, and hardly a detail of their lives remained unrevealed to each other. Reuben's return to active service was hailed with such delight that he did not appear to understand what it meant. He could not realise that the service he had rendered to his shipmate so readily could have taken such heroic proportions in the eyes of the crew. If he could have known, that great deed was, after all, but an incident: it was the lovely life, the splendid man in him which appealed to all hands, as, indeed, it will ever do where men are gathered together. Many complaints of lack of appreciation are heard from men of all classes, but

the truth appears to be that with few exceptions men and women are marvellously generous in their appreciation of one another's good deeds. There is, of course, a bogus hero-worship, an undiscriminating appreciation of work that only makes for evil, and consequently had far better be left undone, but it is only a virtue carried to excess. Let men or women do ever so little good work to-day, and, if it becomes known, their reward is almost certain to transcend their merits by far.

So Reuben, unconsciously as the sun shines or the birds sing, was made the means of sweetening the crew of the *Xiphias*, and keeping them sweet, and at the same time, as a consequence, was teaching them —teaching them how to teach themselves from the great book open around them lessons that would be the delight of their whole remaining lives. Meanwhile the Captain grew more and more irritable, moody, despondent. He still prayed, but listlessly, as if wondering what good it could do. And all this mental agony of his was just due to the lack of commonsense appreciation of the benefits conferred by the Gospel of Christ. What should we say of a parent, who, while ever ready to confer upon his children the best of advice, the best educational advantages possible, and who gave them promises of glorious prospects in the future, should yet keep them without the common necessities of life, food and clothing—yes, not only keep them without, but hinder them from obtaining those things for themselves? Yet this is the idea which so many, the vast majority of orthodox Christians, have of the dear Father God. But the educational process, if of any value, is slow, and Captain Hampden was

learning, unwillingly it is true, but still he *was* learning. At times, though, the content which seemed to possess all hands but himself was very trying to him. He naturally felt that his crew should in some measure share his anxiety over the non-success of the voyage so far, and resentment at their apparently callous conduct often made him miserable. Their behaviour was irreproachable. There was no slackness shown in any duty, and he knew that as far as the look-out was concerned not a fish could leap by day within a radius of four or five miles without being instantly noted by one or more of the six pairs of keen eyes at the mastheads.

But it was not until the old *Xiphias* had rolled her way eastward as far as Gough Island that payable whales were sighted again. Then when within about ten miles of that huge isolated crag rising solitary, awful, out of the vast waste of the Southern Ocean, a dubious cry of 'Blo—o—o—w' was heard from the fore crow's-nest. It told plainly that the utterer was not at all sure whether what he was reporting was worth while troubling after. So many false alarms had been raised, rorquals, finbacks, grampuses had so often filled them with delusive hopes, that only the unmistakable bushy spout of a sperm-whale was looked for. Since, however, no chance, slight though it might be, was neglected, the warning was given, and was presently being repeated by all the other watchers. Captain Hampden rather listlessly mounted the rigging, his binoculars slung to his neck, and reaching the mainyard, focussed them upon the, as yet, far-off whales. One glance was enough. In a tremendous voice he roared his orders to come

down from aloft, prepare to leave the ship, alter the course, &c. He had discovered that a school of 'right' whales was in sight: a species of cetacean, almost identical with the great Greenland whale, and because of the high value of the baleen, or whalebone found in the mouth, worth almost as much in those days as the sperm-whale in spite of the poor quality of 'right' whale oil—perhaps, when all the circumstances were taken into consideration, more, for even the Southern right whale, although certainly more elegant in figure and swifter in movement than his Northern congener, is a meek and gentle creature, in the chase of which an accident is almost unknown.

There were about twenty individuals in the school, of average size—that is to say, each looking as if he or she might yield eighty or ninety barrels of oil and seven or eight hundredweight of bone. I mix up the genders, for, curiously enough, while the sperm-whale cow never attains to much more than one-fourth of the size of the adult cachalot, the *mysticetus*, or right whale has little or no disparity between the size of the sexes; what difference does occur is usually in favour of the female. With great glee the skipper ordered all five boats away, leaving the ship in charge of the four petty officers and two men only; and having told each boat-header to do his level best to get fast to a whale for himself, and not interfere with any other boat's quarry, also to make the best possible time down to where the whales awaited them all unconscious of their proximity, the chase began. Oars and sails were both used with such good effect that although the breeze was not strong the boats fairly flew over the darkened

surface of the sea. It was in the mid-morning—about 10 A.M. and the sky was, as usual in those latitudes, on the edge of the roaring forties, overcast with a thick veil of grey clouds which shut out the sun as effectually as night. And when the sun goes the sea's aspect is cold and cheerless even on the Line. Also, there rolled up from the west mighty knolls of water, the heaving of old ocean's breast, which when they caught a boat, hurled her forwards as if she were flying, sometimes accurately balanced upon a gliding summit as if by the fingers of a juggling genie. Viewed from an independent standpoint, the enterprise of these seafarers would have looked like some forlorn hope whereof the prize was leave to live a little longer and the penalty death. But the men in those boats had no such thought. Their teeth clenched, their nostrils expanded, their eyes ablaze with excitement, they plied their oars, scorning fatigue, overcoming the ache in their bones by sheer will-power, and without a word or sign of encouragement save those which proceeded from their own fierce desire to do better than the fellows in the next boat. It was emulation unpaid, unfostered, raised to its highest power, and achieving far more than any hope of reward could have done.

With a wild yell of delight, the mate's boat dashed into the centre of the school, and his harpooner's weapon flew into the body of the nearest monster like a lightning flash. The other boats, spreading themselves fan-wise, came on the scene almost immediately, and then all the wild delight of the chase, all the romantic interest of the scene was for a season in abeyance. It was too sordid. The

clean sea became a slaughter-house ; the soul-sicken-ing smell of blood permeated the air. The exuding oil from the wounds made the sea quite smooth, although, of course, the swell rolled high as ever. The bewildered victims, unable to fight or flee, rolled helplessly upon the surface, exposing their vitals to the deadly thrust of the long lances, and only by an occasional flap of their mighty tails did they show any sign of resentment or desire to escape. Happily it was soon over. Within half an hour from the time of attack and without the expenditure of one hundred fathoms of line, five whales lay dead upon the solemn sea. No boat was injured, no damage of any kind had been done. And round about the victims and their slayers quietly circled the still-living monsters as if by some horrible fascination held to the spot. The skipper gave orders that none of these apparently mourning ones should be molested—not, be it noted, because of any tenderness for them, but because the average sailor, and especially the whaler, is averse to taking life wantonly. Where profit is concerned blood flows like water—slay, slay, slay, insatiable apparently of slaughter ; but kill for killing's sake as some gentlemen do in a pheasant battue—no : the rude whalemen leave such practices to their betters.

The deadly work had been so well and swiftly done that, as the mate said figuratively, 'a good-sized handkerchief would have covered 'em all.' Making allowance for pardonable exaggeration, the whole of the five certainly lay within half a square mile, and, therefore, two boats were judged sufficient to attend to the needful tail-boring, &c., while the other three cut adrift and sped back to the fast

approaching ship, all their crews in a state of wild delight at so successful an encounter, and feeling quite fresh, for really they had hardly got their second wind. Indeed, it was a busy day for them, although rendered much easier than it would otherwise have been by the exceptionally favourable circumstances. Still, even then the work of getting alongside and securing by the passing of fluke-chains five gigantic bodies like those was bound to be a heavy one in any case. However, it was successfully accomplished by eight bells, noon, and with a satisfied sigh of relief every man made his way below to as good a dinner as the circumstances would admit of.

A full hour was allowed the resting men for food and smoke, and then at the first cry of 'Turn to!' they all scurried on deck as if eager to get to work again. But a surprise awaited them. Instead of the tedious and terribly hard work which they had seen before of cutting off and splitting lengthways the head of the sperm-whale, now the clatter of the pawls was unceasing. Once the upper jaw of the right whale, with its valuable fringe of baleen, is lifted out, the rest of the work of 'fenching,' or skinning the blubber off the body of the whale, is just a pleasant piece of recreation. And here let me say that, whatever may be the practice in bay-whaling when the big body is stranded, it is utterly ridiculous to suppose, as so many readers of fiction do suppose, that men with spikes in their boots get down upon the whale's back and hew slabs of blubber off his body, which they fling on deck. Such a feat would be utterly impossible, besides being most wasteful of time as well as spoil. For the ship and the whale

roll and tumble about to such an extent that standing upon that rolling mass alongside is inconceivable. No: the great 'cutting-tackles' come into play, and once having a wide riband of blubber started off the whale's neck the blubber is unwound as it were by continual hoisting, cutting at the still attached side, and the rolling round of the body.

The men all toiled as if fatigue were a word of no import, nor was a word spoken or needed to spur them on to greater efforts. They toiled until the deck, as well as the blubber-room, was packed from end to end with the mountainous masses of blubber and upper jaws with their wealth of bone. And as the last despoiled carcass was cut adrift the men raised a great shout of joy. It had been such a mighty task, so well and profitably performed, that their exultation was legitimate, and even praiseworthy. But the Captain, feeling the reaction from his great exertions, in a sense of almost overpowering lassitude, slowly dragged himself up on to the little deck aft to have a look round before going below for a meal and a short rest. And he saw a sight that drove the blood back to his heart, and left his extremities cold and numb. In the fury of labour no one had noticed the drift of the ship, nor indeed, the worsening of the weather. True, the sails had all, except the close-reefed main topsail and fore topmast staysail, been furled before beginning, so that the weather mattered little, but—the grim, towering mass of the island was close abeam to leeward. Like some vast cloud it loomed above them, while to windward, through the fast-gathering gloom of evening, came thundering on the rising,

gleaming seas of the great Southern Ocean, precursors of the gale that would presently be here—nay, was already making its presence felt and heard.

For a few moments Captain Hampden stood and gazed irresolute. What could he do? With his deck so hampered by those vast greasy masses that movement fore and aft was well-nigh impossible, with night almost here, and crew worn out with the severe labour they had so cheerfully performed all day, what could he resolve upon? Like an inspiration came the thought, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity,' and baring his head he said, 'O God, save us, don't let us perish like this. Let us escape, please, Father, from this awful danger.' In a moment his relaxing muscles stiffened, he stood erect, and with a voice that reached every corner of the ship he shouted, 'Lay aloft and loose taups'les an't'gallants'les. Drop everything, men, and get sail on her.' There was a momentary hush as the crew took in his words, and then cheerful cries of response came back to him as the weary fellows realised that they were being called upon for a supreme effort. Slipping, clutching, fighting their way over the greasy masses, they scrambled aloft, and soon the white gleams above told of the loosened canvas, while the waiters below tailed on to the halyards and sheets, and in all kinds of apparently impossible attitudes among the slimy obstructions dragged the reluctant sails up again. By the time all possible sail was made there was another and a deeper note mingling with the voice of the storm—the deep roar of the great Atlantic rollers beating up against those aged barriers of rock. But to their amazement the crew felt the vessel's motion ease.

She had been rolling heavily, labouring under the immense upper weight as if bewildered by it and hardly knowing what to do. And now she hardly moved at all, while overside the whole sea seemed smoothed down and ablaze with phosphorescent light. Even the veteran officers were puzzled, until the Captain suddenly bethought him of the gigantic seaweed that in fronds of hundreds of feet in length, and the thickness of a man's body, grows upward to the surface in those waters all around the bases of the island mountains. But was there any protection there? True, the sea had become smooth, but the ship's way had also deadened so that she no longer forged ahead, while it was impossible to ascertain in any way whether or not she was drifting broadside on over the heads of the kelp towards the stern precipices to leeward. The night was now so dark that in spite of the proximity of the mountain to leeward it was impossible to distinguish between one side and the other. Only the ear could tell by that deep moan of the sea against the rock bases.

Nothing could be done now but wait patiently to see what was the will of God concerning them. It was most obvious that if the kelp let them through, the ship must be battered to pieces against those precipices, where the sea was at least twenty fathoms deep alongside the rocks. Anchoring was out of the question—seamanship, in fact, was entirely discounted. And so, feeling all this, Captain Hampden, again raising his voice, summoned all hands aft. 'Boys,' he said, when they had gathered around him, 'this looks like our last night of life. Now we'll pray that God will let us live, but specially we'll pray that if He

doesn't see fit to grant us any more life we may die clean an' wholesome. An' whether we live or die we've done our best, and that's a great comfort.' So holding on in all sorts of attitudes, those hardly bestead men prayed with the skipper, full of faith that whatever the outcome of the night might be, it would be all right. They finished and were dismissed to their quarters, while the gale howled ever louder, and the awful shadow to leeward deepened.

## CHAPTER XV

### A DOUBLE DELIVERANCE

HOUR after hour wore on, while many of the men, in spite of their fears, slept soundly. Rube, indeed, seemed unable to realise that there was any danger at all. Having joined in the general prayer for deliverance he appeared to regard the matter as quite settled, and as not requiring any more care on his or anyone else's part except the Father's. Most of the men, over-borne with weariness both of body and brain, slept fitfully in many uncouth attitudes, some half reclining upon banks of grease-exuding blubber gently heaving with the motion of the ship, others twisted into comfortable corners, apparently impervious to cold, or wet, or fear. But the Captain, more at peace with his surroundings than he could understand, and dimly, subconsciously wondering why, sat on the little deck aft listening to the angry roar of the baffled sea far outside the engirdling groves of kelp. The sullen boom of the rollers against that unseen mass to leeward, the hissing, swishing sound of the great leaves restlessly sliding over each other and against the ship, and the ever-deepening roar of the gale overhead made up a concert truly terrifying in its effect upon the heart. And yet Captain Hampden felt little terror. Know-

ing his utter helplessness, he was driven to as utter a dependence upon a kindly Power which he knew was not merely capable of saving his ship and all hands, but was always benevolently disposed towards man, and never more so than in his hour of deepest distress.

So he sat calmly and wished for the day. Several times he made the beginning of a move, feeling that action of some kind, even though only in the direction of clearing the decks, would be better for all than quietly enduring this season of suspense. But each time he realised how hopeless such an attempt would be in the present condition of the deck and the state of all hands. Therefore, he waited with wonderful patience until the cook's head appeared at his side above the break of the house, and a deferential voice said, 'Wun't yo hab drop ob hot coffee, sah? I got it yah, all ready, sah.' 'Yes, cook, think I will. Jest wut I ben needin' fur a long time 'n' didn't know it' And as he took the cup from the delighted black man he thought how good a thing was service done whole-heartedly, and how well and willingly it was rendered by such men as these. A smile may rise at the thought of any ship-master considering his cook like this, but it would be the smile of ignorance. For if a cup of cold water given in the Master's name shall in no wise lose its reward, there is little doubt that a cup of coffee on a bitter night, prepared with much difficulty, by a man who, although only doing his duty, is doing that duty with all his might, will in like manner gain him a reward. I remember when I was lamp-trimmer on board the *Wentworth*, running

between Sydney and Melbourne, I used to be called at daybreak to duty. After taking in the lamps, my first thought was to make a cup of coffee—it being some time before the cooks were at work. And it was my practice, though in no sense my duty, to take a cup and a piece of toast up to Mr. Wallace, the chief officer, on the bridge, whom I used to picture as burdened with the care of the ship up there in the bleak night. He was a brusque, almost coarse, sailor, but I know he was grateful. A word of thanks from him set my heart dancing (I was barely fifteen years of age), but my chief reward was in the knowledge of having done a kindness. And this is the spirit that moves the world to-day. Everyone should take courage, whatever their creed, in the thought that the Christ ideal, which is unselfishness raised to its highest power, is becoming universal, and that the many exceptions have no contradictory force at all.

By the time Captain Hampden had finished his coffee he found that there was a perceptible lightening of the gloom around, although the wind had increased so much that it was evident, unless something was speedily done to ease the strain upon them, the masts would certainly go. So, rising stiffly to his feet, the skipper sought the mate, finding him ready, standing near the compass, and apparently endeavouring to get a bearing of the land, which was becoming more visible, and, if possible, more horribly threatening in appearance as it did so. 'Good morning, sir,' said Mr. Pease, as soon as he saw the skipper; 'pipin' up, ain't she, sir?' 'Yaas; guess she is, an' ef we want to carry any of our sticks eout

o' this, we'll hev t' git thet canvas off her as quick's it kin be did. I don't think it matters much, anyway, whether she hez canvas on her or not—she can't make much, if any, headway through this weed, an' it looks 's if th' Lord wunt let her go ashore. Go ahead, Mr. Pease, git th' rags off her, 'n' by thet time, please God, it'll be daylight good.'

So the mate obediently roared out his message to the crew, who responded with a phenomenal cheerfulness, clambering over those slimy, greasy masses on deck as if they cared nothing at all for the difficulty of their passage. In half an hour they had shortened her down to the three close-reefed topsails, and besides had cleared up the gear so that no ropes should be in the way of the whale-matter lying about. And having done this they stood by, waiting, oh, so anxiously, the whole of that ship's company ; with just one exception—Rube. He it was who wore always a beaming smile, and sidled up to first one and then the other with some cheering word. Just as a doctor who is always hoping for the best, while taking precaution against the worst, is the most likely to pull his patient through, so this Divine teaching of cheerfulness in the presence of dangerous and depressing circumstances does really seem to win the battle before it is fought. In any case, if the warrior does fall he falls with his face to the foe, and with the high satisfaction thrilling his soul that he has behaved in that last dread hour as became a *man*.

To this little waiting crowd came suddenly the blessing of light. As if some mighty angel's hand had grasped the swart veil of cloud closing them darkly in, and had rent it in sunder from horizon to zenith, the

whole western quadrant of the sky was suddenly lighted up by the brilliant beams of the newly risen sun. So splendid was this enlightening that for a few moments all hands stood awe-stricken, watching the rapidly glancing sabres of glorious flashing colour thrusting the encompassing gloom through and through. Then as if by one impulse all turned to leeward to see how near was the fateful rock. As if it had just leapt out of the gloom, Gough Island was revealed, within a mile (which looks at sea less than a hundred yards does ashore), and every heart for a moment stood still. But after that tribute to human weakness hope instantly reasserted her lovely self. Had they not been kept from perishing all through the blackness of that terrible night? Was it not certain that they were now no nearer the land than when they last saw it clearly, in spite of the stress of the gale upon the ship's broadside? Undoubtedly it was; and more—some of them began to take mental bearings and compare them with the position they could remember the previous evening, finding that at any rate if they were not gaining ground they were certainly not losing.

Suddenly the Captain shouted to the mate, 'Mr. Pease, turn the hands to on the tryin' out. We kain't do nothin' with the ship as she is, an' we mout so well 'muse ourselves doin' somethin' useful.' This pronouncement was hailed with the utmost delight by all hands, and like a swarm of ants they were soon busy cutting, slicing, mincing, boiling, and getting out the bone—so busy, indeed, as well as interested in their work, that they scarcely ever paused to look at the great precipices to leeward of them.

Meanwhile, the Captain had very carefully taken

his cross bearings, and had no sooner completed the simple operation than he felt certain that his vessel was drifting south in almost imperceptible fashion. Hope revived, and he joined his workers with a heart greatly lightened. There by his tremendous exertions and cheery voice he encouraged all hands to attend to present duties, and thus exclude forebodings for the future. And two hours later when he again took his bearings his hopeful supposition became a definite certainty: she had drifted through that hindering kelp, in apparent defiance of the fateful pressure of the gale striving to thrust her on shore, quite two miles nearer safety. Now he felt impelled to shout the glad news to his splendid men who had so nobly responded to the call made upon them. So raising his voice to its fullest compass he roared: 'She's gettin' eout ov it, boys. Praise God we'll be all right yet. There isn't any shipwreck coming off this time. She's gettin' raound th' corner ov th' island in great shape. So peg away, men—while yew're workin' she's a-dreeftin', an' as soon 's ever she gits clear we'll give her every rag she'll drag, an' git away fr'm this uncom'ble neighbourhood.'

A wild cheer answered him, and all hands immediately redoubled their efforts to clear that grease-encumbered deck. Perhaps the gentle reader may feel a little nausea at the idea of a whole crew of men wallowing about in a deck full of dripping—for really it is no exaggeration to call it by that homely name—but I dare make no apology for being as literal and realistic as possible in this matter, since by such methods alone is it possible to make the land-living reader understand what manner of men these were

who wrested such gigantic spoil from the depths of the mighty ocean, and under what circumstances they lived. Here you have men involved in toil of the most strenuous kind under conditions which to the majority of mankind would preclude any action whatever except for self-preservation. And in addition thereto destruction to all waits grimly by the vessel's side, unveiling all its possibilities of horror and inviting man's heart to quail, his muscles to grow flaccid, his mind to become unhinged. And in spite of all you find this lonely group of seafarers steadfastly setting their strength to the accomplishment of their unpoetic task in the highest frame of heroism, which is to do what lies before you with a single eye, not looking for the commendation of your fellow men, but because of the inherent joy involved in just doing one's duty.

So hour by hour slipped by, the mincing-machine clattered incessantly, the flame from the twin chimneys of the try-works soared palely into the keen air, and was swept off at right angles to leeward by the wind as if it were some angelic sword stabbing at the grim mass to eastward of them. And the effect of their labours was manifest in that a clear gangway along the deck was now made right fore and aft. Into the midst of the toil came the clear, cheerful voice of the skipper calling, 'Dinner, men, an' befo' y' go remember she's gittin' cl'ar 's fast' s ever th' weed'll allow her. She's made quite four miles of southin' sence eight bells—that's a mile an hour. An' ef she keeps that goin' through the afternoon as she has this forenoon we'll be cl'ar o' th' whole thing by sundown.' 'Hooray! bully fer th' skipper,' shouted

the crew, and seizing such rags, wads of oakum, and the like, as they could get hold of they sauntered forward, wiping down as they went. They were saturated from head to heel with oil, they looked like a gang of piratical scarecrows, but I make bold to say that they were as heroic a crowd as ever came out of the most hardly contested battle. And on reaching the dim chamber, reeking with a foul combination of evil smells, they squatted around on the greasy deck and received each man in his little tin dish a portion of salt pork, a few spoonfuls of haricot beans, and a little loaf. Everyone doffed his cap, everyone felt thankful for this portion of coarsest food, and Reuben only focussed the general sense of the company when he said, holding one hand out before him, 'Lovin' God, we're alive t' eat, an' work, an' thank Thee. We do, an' ask You t' make us thankful men, keep us good men, not ashamed of one another or of Thee. For Christ's sake. Amen.' The 'Amen' was so heartily echoed that Rube looked around startled. He could hardly believe his ears. With all his beautiful, childlike faith in God, he had, like most of us, but little faith in man, and when he found how mightily God was working in the crowd around him he was, as most of us would be, moved to profoundest wonder. Like most of us, he had not believed 'according to your faith be it unto you,' or that when man's faith fails, God, who cannot be disheartened, steps in and does in His own way His own work at His own appointed time.

Little was said during the meal—all were too ravenous with hunger for that; but when the last scrap of food had been eaten up, and the utensils

cleared away by the cook of the mess, pipes were stuffed with greasy tobacco and lighted, and although each pipe emitted a peculiar frizzling sound as of frying, and the odour of the oily weed would certainly have driven an ordinary smoker frantic, each man's face wore a perfectly satisfied expression, and a desultory conversation began. 'Don thatt wass a narr' squeak, hey,' muttered a square-built little Italian, who lay coiled up by the pawl-bitt. 'I thinkin' I promesso giva candela thosa sainta, onlee I carn faget thees name thata time.' 'Mean yew cuddent 'member, I 'spose,' grumbled a Down Easter by his side. 'Si, grazie,' eagerly responded the Italian. 'Don't can memb'. Nev' mine. Savea one dolla. 'Sides, how I know ef thatt Sancta goin' elpa me bord una barca eretico lika thees?' 'Look here,' Antone, said a deep voice out of the gloom across the fo'c'sle, 'You better pay fur that candle, annyhow. Give it as a thank-off'rin' 'at yew wuz aboard a heretic ship. I guess 'fore th' machinery of your crowd c'd a-got in working order we sh'd all a-ben gone up. Wut d' ye say, boys?' A hoarse murmur of approval ran round, while poor Antone grew hot as if feeling that it was incumbent upon him to defend his faith. But suddenly realising that as he had never understood what his faith was except doing just what he was told (when it was easy) by the priest, he fell back upon common-sense, and replied, 'Well, corse I don' know anyt'ing about 'cept I'm eatina dinner, smokina pipe. Ef I say Dio Grazie thatt goin' be alla righta, no Rube, eh, whatt?' The deep, cheerful voice of Reuben immediately chimed in, 'Of course, Antone, if you reelly are thankful to God.'

But if He's spared your life, you ought to remember it an' see if you can't do somethin' with it for Him. An' when you come to think of it—it ain't much to ask—that you shall be clean in mind, an' tongue, that you shall be kind and helpful, an' true, an' that you shall remember not now and then, but always, the gentle, loving Jesu Christo, your every-day and all-day Friend.' The impressionable little Italian's face was all awork as this little talk fell from Rube's lips. It went, in spite of his disability in language, right home to his hot southern heart, and the bright drops of sensibility's precious dew glistened on his russet beard.

But Mr. Pease's stentorian voice was heard shouting, 'Turn-to!' and on the instant pipes were laid aside, belts were tightened, caps pressed down upon tanned brows, and a rush upwards was made from those foetid quarters into the bright, invigorating air, which really seizes upon a man newly emerged from the foulness below like a pleasant vertigo, making him wonder whatever can be the matter with him. The first thing each man did upon reaching the deck was to give a swift glance to leeward. And as each did so a very real sense of gratitude flooded his heart. For it no longer needed the skipper's cheery assurance that all was well to satisfy the most ignorant of them that they were now, humanly speaking, out of danger. True, they were not yet past the fringe of kelp, their vessel was as yet quite unmanageable, and the gale blew with undiminished vigour. But still it was evident that the steady stress of that invisible force beneath them would not allow them to be driven any farther shoreward, and, quite satisfied, they turned to their work with as

much lack of concern for the safety of the ship as if no land had been in sight.

Seeing that all was proceeding so cheerily, Captain Hampden called the mate, and said, 'Mr. Pease, I ain't quite 's young 's I wuz, 'n' after last night I begin t' feel the flesh pullin' a bit. So if you'll jest give an eye t' her, I'll go 'n' hev an hour's caulk. Maybe I'll need it to-night, though I hope all will be in good shape 'fore dark. 'N' 's soon 's ever yer git th' decks cl'ar o' blubber, set yer watches—blubber watches, o' course. Le's give this grand lot er fellows all th' rest we kin.' 'Aye, aye, sir,' cheerily answered the mate ; 'ef I hadn't 'a felt it 'd be persoomin' I'd 'a' asked yew to go 'n' hev a spell long ago. We kain't afford t' hev yew crackin' up, y' know, sir. An' yew c'n be quite sure 'at everythin' 'll go like clockwork. I don't believe they's a spouter afloat to-day 's got such a bully crowd 's we hev, an' I'm sure yew think the same, Cap'n.' 'I dew jest that,' sleepily murmured the old man as he swung off towards the companion and disappeared.

Thoroughly wearied as he was, and with a great weight lifted from his mind, the good old man sank at once, as soon as he lay down, into a deep sleep. But although it was in reality fully two hours since he lay down, when he suddenly realised that he was wide awake he seemed certain that he had but just dozed off. It is a curious sensation, but fairly common among seamen, this of suddenly passing from the depths of sleep to uttermost clearness of thought and readiness for action. For a moment he waited, listening intently for some recurring sound, explaining why he should thus have awakened, as he

thought, so soon. But except for the creaking of the old ship's timbers and the deep murmur of the gale there was no sound noticeable, and these lullabies would certainly have kept him sleeping. However, the feeling that something had happened which needed his attention forced itself upon him, and rising stiffly from the hard cushions of the transom locker, he snatched his cap and climbed on deck. One swift glance forward showed him how strenuously his men had been toiling while he slept, for the deck was clear to the try-works, and the latter were smoking furiously, while the attendant gnomes came and went, tirelessly carrying on their great task. He looked overside and saw that the weed was perceptibly less in quantity; he looked at the land and—surely it could not be—and yet—his hawk-like vision could not play him false. He grabbed his glasses and focussed them on what he saw—a rag of fluttering white among the sombre rocks, immediately satisfying himself that someone needing help was there. Instantly all the powers of his mind were busy devising means for the assistance of any unfortunate stranded in so wild a spot. Again and again he surveyed that tiny flutter of white; again and again he took an undecided step forward as if to give an order, until at last he said aloud, 'Wall, God he'pin' us, we ort to do something, though how is more than I can see. All hands on deck!' he roared, and in two minutes the mate was by his side, his big eyes staring full of inquiry at his commander. 'Wut is it, sir?' he gasped. 'It's a wrecked crew, I reckon, Mr. Pease. D'ye see yonder flicker of white in that cleft between those two big rocks—no, a bit to starboard, so?'

'Yes, sir, I see it,' said the mate ; 'd'ye make it out to be a signal, sir?' 'I do, jest that, Pease, an'—but here kems the boys. Naow, then, m'lads, thar's life to be saved. Lower away starboard quarter-boat, 'n' yew, Mr. Peck (it's yewr boat anyhow) make the best way yew kin to whar yew see yon white flicker among th' rocks. Yew'll hev to warp yewr way along through the kelp as best yew can, and when yew git cluss to it, be keerful—be jest as keerful as yew know how ; fur we kain't spare either yew er yewr boat's crew. Thar'll be an all-fired heavy swell on the beach (if they is any beach) fur all it looks so smooth frum here. Thish yer kelp stops the sea rollin' in, but it kain't stop th' swell, y' know. Now, give way, and God go with yew t' save.'

At the word the boat left the ship, the crew plying their oars with great difficulty, because of the encumbering weed. So they soon shipped oars, and took their paddles—every whaleboat having five of these primitive but exceedingly useful propellers stowed in their beackets under the thwarts—and with much laborious effort urged their boat shoreward. As they neared the black, forbidding cliffs the officer's heart sank, for he saw how apparently inaccessible they were, and how the gigantic southern swell, with never a foamy break, rose and fell against those awful precipices. The long streamers of kelp like multitudinous serpents writhed around the bared rock bases, then disappeared as the whole mighty body of water lifted, lifted, lifted until it seemed as if it must submerge the mountain tops. And still that tiny white rag fluttered forth its agonising message : 'Come and save us.'

Be it noted that while Mr. Peck was fully alive to the tremendous danger awaiting him and his brave fellows, the possibility of his not being able to fulfil his errand of mercy never occurred to him. He was one of those wonderful fellows who never calculate beforehand the chances of defeat. And these are the men who do great deeds, although it be accounted criminal in war to neglect the keeping open of a line of retreat. So by every encouraging word he could speak he urged the toiling crew to greater effort, until the kelp became so thick that paddling was no longer possible, and they had perforce to haul the boat along by grasping the long strands of black vegetation that rose and fell rhythmically around them. Nearer and nearer they drew, near enough to distinguish a forlorn little company of people clambering precariously over the rocks and making (as yet) unintelligible signs to them. Nearer and nearer yet, until it became evident that the refugees were waving them towards a gigantic escarpment which rose fully five hundred feet almost perpendicularly from the sea, and at one angle seemed to present an edge just like a jagged sabre. They altered their course in obedience to these frantic signallings, and presently found themselves fighting for life against the heave and hurl of the swell, which suddenly seemed to have found force that was lacking before when they were farther from the land. The ropes of kelp slithered through their bleeding hands, great fronds arose mysteriously from the blackness and swept across the boat, scourging them as with giant whips ; they cowered and groaned, and begged for mercy in undertones, but toiled on. And then, when all their efforts appeared to have failed because

the poor human machines could no longer respond to the merciless call made upon them, came a blessed lull, the boat swept round the sabre-edge of the cliff, and there, free from kelp, was a tiny crevasse with deep blue water just gently rising and falling, and a ledge of clean rock running all round it. Upon this ledge was clustered a strange company, savage and weird-looking, long elf-locks bleached by wind and storm, garments of every imaginable material and shape. Ten of this company were crouching at the edge nearest the boat with uplifted hands and streaming eyes.

But when the boat came near enough for them to leap in there was a pause. Even in here the outer swell made itself felt, and without careful handling a calamity was imminent at the last moment. Therefore Mr. Peck shouted to the little group to watch when the swell came gently, as it did after every three rolls, when he would let the boat almost graze the rocks, and four, no more, at a time, must jump into the middle of the boat. Then it was seen that the refugees were encouraging three smaller figures, patting them, pointing to the boat, making signs as they talked, until one voice rang out sharply from the shore: 'Dear boys, these three are women—do try and catch them, they've suffered so much.' Ah! had any stimulus been wanted this would have supplied it, for it is the glory of the Anglo-Saxon race, and especially of the American branch of the old tree—its reverence for woman, whether mother, wife, or sister. The boat rose gently shoreward, the officer shouted, 'Now,' and three shrinking figures half jumped, half fell, into the outstretched arms of the

boatmen. 'Safe, thank God!' shouted the former speaker from the shore. The rest was easy. The remaining seven took careful bearings and leaped at the right moments until the whole ten were snugly bestowed, and it was time to turn the boat's head seaward again.

But now she was overloaded. If it had been a heavy task coming in with her light before the swell, what would it now be going out deeply laden—not six inches of freeboard amidships—against that awful surge? For one moment Peck's heart failed him as he weighed the possibilities. Then—and this was a miraculous thing, seeing that never before had he entertained such an idea—he lifted his cap and said, or rather shouted, for the roar of the swell was almost deafening: 'Boys, le's ask God t' he'p us out of this hole. Keep her steady with the paddles. "O God, we're all in Your han's. We're tryin' t' save life, we're doin' our best, we b'lieve we *kain't* go under without You lets us. Naow save our lives so 's we k'n praise You all the days ov our life." Naow let her have it, boys. Paddle fur yer lives, an' as soon 's we strike the kelp, gather it in an' haul fur all yer wuth. Passengers, lie still in th' bottom o' th' boat.'

## CHAPTER XVI

### A REIGN OF TERROR

FAR more frequently than any shore-living people can imagine, there occur times on board ship when it seems as if the whole condition of things must be overwhelmed in one red holocaust. No ship, whatever her position or character may be, is quite exempt from such crises as these. For at sea all hands are compelled to feel that they have been driven back upon primitive conditions, and the one paramount question demanding answer is: 'How much longer can I bear this?' No such problem ever confronts shore people, for the most obvious reason: there is always a way of escape—at sea there is none. And, if the true inwardness of all the awful sea tragedies that have ever been known were inquired into, it would be found that nearly all of them originated in a condition of things such as I have been sketching. A brutal, unscrupulous villain (we have had them in the British Navy) at the head of affairs, a vilely truckling gang of officers ready at a nod to carry out that villain's behests, and before the mast a mob of men driven frantic by ill-treatment yet lacking initiative, the one ignition spark which only a genius can supply. A case in point is afforded by the tragedy of the *Bounty*. Concerning that terrible

mutiny reams have been written wherein the horrid crimes of the sailors are continually held up to execration, but how seldom is passing mention given to the true cause of the whole awful business—the treatment of the men by the commander, who seemed to have felt it his duty to make his men realise before death what sort of a place the infernal regions must be. Only the lack of initiative has prevented the tale of sea tragedies from being a hundredfold as many, not the desert of those in charge, who seem to have exhausted the ingenuity of fiends in their behaviour towards their hapless crews.

Still, it must be confessed, and gladly, too, that few indeed are the captains or officers who set out with the deliberate intention of goading their crews to the point of madness just apparently in order to exhibit their power of command, their ability to control even the most frantic crowd of men. Few men are as wicked as that. But Captain Da Silva certainly was, and his visit to Brava was made with deliberate intent to procure certain auxiliaries upon whom he could rely for aid in the vile purpose he had set before himself—viz., that of trampling under foot triumphantly men of the hated Anglo-Saxon race, with all their nonchalant assumption of moral and mental superiority. Therefore it was that no sooner had sail been made and filled away for the southward than his plan of campaign began. The recruits—all of whom, be it noted, had been to sea before—were carefully apportioned by him throughout the two watches. They alone were allowed to steer the ship, and with each of them while at the wheel the skipper would converse in their own language, while the

American officers could not help but listen uncomprehendingly, with black rage in their hearts, yet in utter impotence. For what could they do? If the skipper was powerful before, sufficiently so to enforce his will, he was omnipotent now. And these six black Portuguese felt it in their bones. They did not refuse to carry out any order given them by the officers, but they behaved in a singularly offensive manner as who should say, 'We do this not to obey you, but because we are your master's cronies, and it isn't yet time in his opinion that we should show you how we regard you.'

If this state of things was hard of endurance for the officers, it was trebly so for the men. In the foc'sle the Dagoes were now about even in numbers with the Americans and other white men, but in physique the former were far superior. And all conversation ceased in that sad place. No man dared to complain, even under his breath, for everyone felt that the foc'sle was a sort of Dionysius' Ear, where every word uttered immediately resounded in the private apartments of the skipper. All the worst of the work was reserved for the white men, every soft job was kept for the blacks, and no man durst say a word, for all knew as well as could be that sitting in the midst of this web of devilishness was the skipper pulling the cords and gloating over his revenge.

Finest weather, bluest of skies, and an almost utter absence of squalls attended the *Grampus* as she crossed the Line. And through it all, watch and watch, the sorely tried white portion of the crew were kept at work scrubbing and polishing until even the flagship of our Mediterranean Squadron

would not, so far as cleanliness went, have surpassed her. And it was with a perfect pang of delight that all hands heard the long-drawn cry of 'Blow' from the mastheads when off Fernando Noronha. Well knowing what bone-wrenching toil it would bring, they yet welcomed the prospect of whaling almost gleefully—anything for a change in the deadly monotony of their daily life. Poor fellows !

They had a grand day's sport, about which I can say very little since it was all so orthodox and free from extraordinary incident. The whales were medium-sized cows—that is to say, ranging from twenty-five to forty barrels each—and as the big bull leader of the school went off to windward at top speed when the battle began, there was but little fighting : it was just a butchery. The poor, silly creatures crowded round each other quite helplessly, and submitted to be done to death almost as complacently as does the great right whale of the Arctic regions. Of course, Captain Da Silva took part in the slaughter. Else it had been but a wasted day for him. For he had, in common with some of the old Romans, an insatiable blood-thirst that could not be gratified as he craved owing to the hampering laws of civilisation, and he was therefore driven to quench it by conflict with the mighty whale, utterly heedless, to all appearance, of any probability of danger to himself. His absence from the ship tempted Priscilla on deck.

She has been neglected of late in this chronicle for several reasons. First, any allusion to her must of necessity be tame, since she had voluntarily taken upon herself the *role* of a patient martyr, from whom

no taunt or even ill-usage could wring a complaint. Secondly, any information about her is scarcely possible since she was more like an automaton than aught else—moving, indeed, waking, sleeping, and eating (very little), but speaking hardly ever, and apparently determined to efface herself as much as possible from the life of the ship. She was an insoluble puzzle to her husband. At first he was brutal in the extreme, even to the length of striking her, but to this treatment she opposed a stolidity of demeanour which alarmed him. Then he became gentler, spoke to her civilly, almost kindly, with the same result. Superstitious terrors took possession of him, for he began to wonder whether, indeed, she had not died, only her body retaining sufficient volition to keep about among them. He noticed that she never spoke one word to anyone but him, and gave way to the opinion that some change—he knew not what—had taken place, and unless he wished to be haunted (of which, like the majority of Latins, he had an awful dread) he had better let her alone. So, unconsciously, she had been led to do just the right thing in order to secure what tiny modicum of comfort still remained possible of attainment in her present position. And, as for suffering—well, the edge of that was dulled to such an extent that she often surveyed herself as it were from an impartial mental standpoint, and wondered mildly whether she was indeed the discontented, prideful Priscilla Fish of olden days or not. I do not like, especially in a work of this kind, to insist continually upon the sacred ability to detach oneself from the things of sense that God gives His dear ones, yet how other-

wise, I ask myself, can the literalness, the common-sense application of real Christianity be brought home to people who have been trained from infancy to believe that religion is an excrescence, as it were—something of external growth which can be applied like a poultice by a skilled professional at hand at seasons when needed?—how otherwise explain that Christ *does* dwell in the hospitable heart, and there produces a toleration of (not an indifference to) the world's vicissitudes, so that 'in the world, but not of it' becomes a fact of experience, not a pretty theory?

Priscilla had been taught this by the Teacher Himself; the Comforter had come with His consolations to this poor soul, and there amid all that made for misery she was as nearly happy as the flesh will allow. Occasionally, in almost an ecstasy of joy, she sat communing with God, forgetting all else, unconscious for the time of any other environment than that of the Holy of Holies. Herein I can see lie twin dangers—in the expression of this fact, I mean: the one that this must be an argument for the conventional life, the other that such matters are entirely unreal—the outcome of mystical meditation, and as unsubstantial and inapplicable to the ordinary details of life as is the hermetic philosophy of the ancients. Well, it takes all sorts of people to make a world, and if there were no unbelievers in God's immanent companionship and no misunderstandings of His dealings with His children, His Kingdom would be come, and we should no longer need to pray for it. I can only reiterate with all simplicity and directness that in such wise (as I have feebly tried to describe Priscilla's case) God *does* associate with

men and women. That the words, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' are literally, not figuratively, true; and that millions of His children, given the opportunity, will gladly testify to the same. How else, do you think, do men and women live on through long lives, seeing what they do see of their fellow humans, knowing what they must know of the Powers of Darkness visible, and still preserve intact their childlike faith in Jesus and His love? Only because it is literally, absolutely true that 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'

But in spite of her joy in the Lord, it must be admitted that Priscilla occasionally felt an almost overwhelming longing to breathe the free, fresh air of Heaven. For that had of late been a luxury denied her. She had been practically forbidden to go on deck, to appear at table. Her husband had developed along with his belief in her uncanny powers a horrible jealousy of her—so much so that he would not allow her to be seen by any of the crew or officers. And although he had not actually in so many words forbidden her to come on deck, yet so many obstacles had been placed in her way, even to locking her in her berth, that at last she had dumbly acquiesced in this condition of things, and submitted to breathe the fetid air of the little cabin, which, as everyone who has ever been on board of even a trading vessel knows, is foul and vitiated beyond description. It is no paradox to say that there is more air and less ventilation at sea than anywhere on earth. Therefore it was no wonder that, learning from the

faithful darkey steward of her husband's absence at the whaling, she crept timidly on deck and sat on the transom, looking out over the wide brightness of the sea with feelings of almost intolerable complexity. She had learned, in the same perfect way, to take the keenest delight in the beauties of creation ; scenes that so many of us pass over unheedingly were to her almost poignant in their revelations of the Father's benevolent and beautiful designs, and in proportion as she was debarred from enjoying them so she prized them. Perfectly natural. How many an old sailor has gone grumbling through his long seafaring career apparently all unheeding the glories so lavishly spread before his sullen gaze, and then when retired to some dull, inland village in his old age, perhaps blind and deaf, he has feasted on the treasures of memory, and again in fancy watched his gallant vessel leaping blithely from sea to sea, or breasting steadily as if with unconquerable resolution and force the relentless thrust of the storm-wind and its accompanying sea.

So Priscilla sat aft, soaking her soul in beauty and utterly oblivious of her surroundings, until even her inexperienced eye detected a returning boat—one that neared the ship at a great rate, the oars rising and falling as if steam driven, and with a feather of spray at her bow, showing at what a high rate of speed she was approaching. Priscilla slipped quickly below, her heart full of thankfulness that she had been enabled to get a glimpse of the sea and sky, and also that she had succeeded in retreating before the advent of her husband. Truly she had but little margin of time, for he, standing erect in his boat's

stern, had been watching the ship with vulture eyes, and before she had been ten minutes below he was on board, his awful voice ringing fore and aft like that of some destroying angel.

Seven cow whales had been killed, and the securing of them alongside meant a truly herculean task, which was prolonged until nearly midnight, by which time the vessel looked as if she was the centre of an island of flame. Surrounded by these great carcasses against which the sea broke in lambent light, the rendezvous for tens of thousands of sharks, whose swift coming and going through the phosphorus-charged waves made them glow like the moon, the scene was one of almost awful beauty. But none there took any notice of it. The crew, half dead with fatigue, stumbled about obeying mechanically the orders given, but hardly able to keep awake, much less pull or lift as they were ordered. At last the mate approached the skipper, saying : 'Cap'n Da Silva, hadn't I better order the men to rest awhile? I'm afraid we'll be losing some of 'em overboard if I don't, they're all so dead beat, sir.' Looking around to see if any of the men were within hearing, the skipper took a step towards the mate, and with a perfectly devilish glare in his eyes, said : 'Yew lazy American pig, yew dirty helpless dog, I'll teach yew t' interfere with *my* business. I'd jes' soon kill ye as look at ye, fr all th' good y' are. But I'll do worse 'n that. I'll make yew wish yew was dead, hunders of times 'fore I'm done with ye.' Up flew the mate's fist as he made a spring towards his skipper, but as he sprang he was confronted by the muzzles of two revolvers in the skipper's hands. He

stopped with a groan—the thought of his dear ones at home in Fairhaven was too much for him ; and as he fell back he heard a chuckle overhead, and there was a Portuguese harpooner on the top of the house with another revolver pointed at him. ‘Wall,’ drawled the skipper, ‘y’ see I’m heeled. I’m layin’ fur ye every time. Ef y’ git t’ windward of me yew’ve only one more t’ git ahead of, an’ that’s Satin himself. I tell ye, I’m goin’ t’ make this ship hell fr all of ye, but yew an’ th’ secon’ mate specially. But if y’ wa’n’t such curs, yew’d take y’r chances. I don’t mind dyin’ a little bit, ‘n’ ef yew liked to try it on at a little risk why y’ mout git my gun an’ shoot me.’

For decency’s sake it becomes necessary to draw a veil over the proceedings of the next few weeks. No one likes to record the degradation of his fellow-men or dwell upon their unmerited miseries. And, indeed, every white man on board the *Grampus* endured for the rest of the passage such torments and indignities as make the blood boil only to think of—endured them helplessly, hopelessly. Meanwhile, every slice of good fortune imaginable seemed to attend upon the miscreant. The passage round the Cape was made in lovely weather, and as soon as ever they hauled up for the Mozambique Channel they fell in with a school of whales extending to the horizon. It was at daybreak, too, so for the whole of that terrible day they toiled at slaying under the furious sun. No idea apparently was entertained by the skipper of the enormous amount of labour being accumulated. When night fell there were over twenty carcasses encumbering the sea, the ship was unable to move for the weight already attached to

her, and, had she been able, the wind had fallen to an almost perfect calm. But not until every man, including his own personal bodyguard, had succumbed to sheer weariness did the skipper 'let up,' and say that a 'spell-ho' of an hour or two might be enjoyed. In strict justice it must be said that he had taken no rest—in fact, it appeared as if he had laboured harder than any other man on board. But what of that? What would become of us all if we were compelled to keep up to the physical standard of the most sinewy and strenuous among us? Certainly a great thinning out of the population would immediately ensue.

Therefore, at 8 P.M. a halt was reluctantly called, and one by one the boats returned, their crews barely able to drag themselves on deck, and utterly incapable of hoisting the boats when they had done so. Of the difficulty of getting alongside, thrusting their frail boats in between the massy bodies attached to the ship and tumbling gigantically about upon the sullen swell, I dare not speak: it needs a chapter to itself. It must be sufficient to say that all hands returned, succeeded in getting on board, fell down where they alighted, and slept like the dead—so much like that two happy fellows did not trouble to wake again: they were found stiff and cold in the morning. But as that was merely an incident of the campaign (in war it is thought nothing of) there is no excuse for dwelling upon it—let it pass.

The matter worth recording is that at midnight, the placid moon looking down upon the deck of the *Grampus* as if it were a stricken field—the corpses lying hideously scattered where they fell—there was



THE DHOWS CREEPT CAUTIOUSLY TOWARDS THE IMMOVABLE SHIP.



a great outcry. The skipper, ever alert, had seen along the moonbeams' path the oncoming of some suspicious-looking craft. His experience fixed them at once as Arab dhows bent on plunder. Strange how the Arab is a born thief and murderer, as is the Chinese, and neither of them ever feels any compunction for his crimes.

The dhows crept cautiously towards the immovable ship, and Captain Da Silva watched them coming, the fierce light of battle in his eye. But he wasted no time. He knew that his ship was surrounded by an almost impregnable defence (at night), and so he devoted his leisure to loading carefully the half-dozen Sniders possessed by the ship. (Those old Tower Sniders have gone all over the world.) Then he called up his chums, sailors and harpooners, and no small task it was to get life into them. But he succeeded at last, and then posting them all aft with a Snider and a revolver apiece, and much ammunition, he waited gleefully the advent of the sea Bedawy. They came, and were astonished to find that a barrier of something floating, slimy, massive, and impassable interposed between them and their objective. And while they groped darkling, the Sniders sang their awful song, red spear-points of flame clove the darkness, and many an Arab sank down upon the rough-timbered deck of his buggalow coughing out his foul life. Only an hour, and the attack was over. It would never have been begun but that the Arabs forecasted a helpless merchant ship whose crew they could kill easily as sheep, and with as little compunction, and whose hold they should find crammed with choicest merchandise

only awaiting the advent of the enterprising sons of the East.

It seems incredible, but such was the fatigue of the crew that when morning dawned the majority of them were quite unaware of the happenings of the night. Perhaps, dimly through their dreams had come the ping of dropping shots, uneasy shudderings might have accompanied the dying yells of the Arabs, but taking everything all round they knew nothing about it. Nor did they greatly care. The dawn but brought them bone-wrenching toil. Who among them would have given thanks for the paternal (?) care manifested for them by the skipper during the dead hours of the night? For their condition was that so amply and aptly summed up by Moses in his dread warning to the children of Israel: 'In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were evening, and in the evening thou shalt say, Would God it were morning.'

Long before daylight they were aroused and started upon the tremendous task, too broken to give more than a passing regretful thought to the two favoured ones whose trials were over. This will, I know, strike many as an utterly uncalled-for exaggeration of horror, an incident that could only have occurred during mediæval times. I beg to say, however, that in the American whaleships mediæval disregard of life persisted as nowhere else among civilised peoples down to well within the latter half of the nineteenth century. Heroic figures the commanders were, brave beyond praise were the officers, but with that wonderful quality was, alas, too generally mingled an utter callousness to suffering—an

utter disregard of the elementary rights of their fellow men which to a humarer age will hardly bear detailed description. And, of course, this was an exceptionally bad case. The cruelty of the Latin is inherent—generally speaking, he takes a greedy pleasure in the suffering of others; while the cruelty of the Teutonic races is incidental—an abnormality calling forth the fiercest reprobation from those of the same race to whom it becomes known.

For the next ten days the *Grampus* was a horrid shambles. She reeked in every part with blood and grease, and the blazing sun, pouring down upon her with never a cloud to temper his fierceness throughout the long and weary days, made her foul with a foetor beyond description. Captain Da Silva and his Portuguese seemed to flourish and wax stronger among the awful vileness of stench and filth, even as do the Arabs of African coast-towns. But the American portion of the crew fell ill one by one. Although haggard and woe-worn, they stuck to their work until they fell at their posts. In this calamity Priscilla was involved. Indeed, it would have been a miracle had she escaped. The confinement alone in that terrible climate was sufficient to make anyone seriously ill, especially when the miserable food and lack of exercise were added, without the fearful foulness of that ten days.

The sickness of his crew gave the skipper no concern. He thought grimly of the splendid recruits he would by and by obtain, supposing all the cursed Americans were dead. But the illness of his wife gave him pause. In some inexplicable way, he—well, I cannot say loved or had a tenderness for her—I

would not desecrate the holy word love by associating it with such a monster of evil as he was, but he did not desire to be without her. And so, cursing his ill-luck, he bore up under all sail for the Cosmoledo group of islands intending to spend there, amid the pure fresh breezes of the South-East Trade, and free from the miasmatic vapours of a great port, a sufficient time to rest his invalids, and by judicious distribution of quinine, fresh cocoanut, and fresh food to bring them round again. Strangely enough, this complication in the midst of his success, the dread presence on board of fever, and the illness of half his crew gave this extraordinary man no anxiety. He seemed to stand aloof from all merely human emotions except the viler ones, and as for fear he apparently knew not the meaning of the word. And his auxiliaries were the same. For them it was a time of rejoicing. They were the undoubted rulers of the vessel, and their superiority to the much-vaunted white man was overwhelmingly manifest.

Two more poor fellows succumbed to their burden before reaching port. One of them was the third mate. Their passing excited no comment, nor did their informal burial (they were just dumped like so much lumber) more than punctuate the day's work. Then the vessel arrived, and was piloted in between the reefs with consummate skill by the skipper. Down went her anchor, and in the peaceful waters of a coral-locked lagoon the *Grampus* lay secure.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SALVAGE OPERATIONS

THOROUGH in all his undertakings, Captain Da Silva wasted no time after the vessel was well moored in carrying out the purpose for which he had visited this outlandish group of islands. Boats were at once lowered and loaded with all the requisite material for erecting tents ashore. Then while one party was sent to establish a temporary sanatorium on a high part of the largest island, a place where the sweet unceasing breeze should blow through the open doors of the tents, another party was detailed to catch fish, tortoises (for here are to be found still some of those most interesting survivals of a long-departed day, the gigantic tortoise), and to collect unripe cocoanuts, one of the most healthful of all foods as well as one of the pleasantest of drinks. The preparations were rapidly completed—when Captain Da Silva was around no one wasted time—the sick were transferred to the shore, and in business-like fashion attended to, as far as a change of diet and such primitive medicines as were available could be brought to bear upon them. Priscilla, much to the skipper's concern, apparently took no interest in the proceedings at all. He was really alarmed to see how automatically she behaved and how attenuated was her once bonny

form. He did *not* want to lose her—would rather have lost all hands—though he could not tell why. And therefore, having done all he could think of for her, and consequently much more for the other sufferers than he would otherwise have thought of doing, he turned from sheer need of occupation to the ship again ; and his energy was such that all his innate power of command was needed to maintain discipline among his own countrymen. The Portuguese, like the Italian, can and does work for amazingly long periods at high pressure, always providing that the incentive is sufficiently powerful. But always these two races would rather loaf than work—would rather lie round in the sun and let the world wag as it will than put their shoulders to any wheel whatever. And they always make the severest task-masters, slave-drivers. There must be a deep delight for a truly lazy man in the power of compelling his fellows to stretch their sinews under his eye. Must be, because one sees so much of it in journeying around the world—the measureless content evidenced in the boss who lolls and shouts curses and commands at the toilers below him, with a very real satisfaction in the knowledge that any one of them would gladly trample his face into the mud they work in if only the chance came.

Captain Da Silva, then, having arranged for his invalids satisfactorily, and left the negro steward and one of his cronies to guard his wife in her lonely tent, returned on board and entered upon a furious campaign of scrubbing and disinfecting. His countrymen, who were practically the whole working gang, seconded his efforts splendidly, albeit with deep

resentment, at first against him, but by his clever manipulation, afterwards against all the whites on board. 'Why should these fellows be lyin' up ashore while better men were doin' the work?' This with but little variation was the burden of the Portuguese song, and by a skilfully dropped word at well-chosen intervals Captain Da Silva fanned the incipient flames and made every Dago understand that the *Grampus* was a Dago ship from henceforth, and that, although the American flag flew overhead, her American crew were of no importance whatever. In spite of this satisfaction, however, the Dagoes were very sore at being worked so hard, and it needed all the great influence of the skipper's master mind to prevent an outbreak. He kept them at work so steadily, too, that they got little or no chance to brood over their wrongs. The water in the casks below was started and run off, fresh, sweet water being brought on board to re-fill ; and the newly emptied casks were all fresh scoured and fired within before replenishing. An enormous supply of wood was obtained, mostly drift-timber, for upon this little group of neglected islands the whorl of many currents centres, bringing flotsam from immense distances. And when nothing else was a-doing, the sick needed attention, and got it too, although of a horribly rough and grudging kind.

At last the discontent ran so high that it may reasonably be doubted whether even Captain Da Silva could have much longer held it in check, but then with his usual extraordinary good fortune there came a diversion that effectually settled all grumbling and put all hands in high feather. A huge four-masted iron ship, grossly under-manned as usual,

came blundering up through the Mozambique Channel, bound for Diego Garcia with coal. The parsimony of her owners had provided her with but one chronometer, and her skipper was not only a poor man who couldn't afford one of his own, but he was withal so poorly educated that he couldn't have worked a lunar observation to save his life. Thus it came to pass that one night during a heavy thunder-storm, when the whole heavens were apparently draped with black velvet, he found his vessel bumping upon the reefs, not heavily, for there was but little wind or swell, but sufficiently forceful to make him feel that his command was doomed. And ships like the *Warrior Queen* are only manned for the finest of fine weather—when trouble of any kind comes they must needs trust to luck. Out of eighteen men in the forecastle, four were sailors, and they were old, the rest were just unskilled labourers, loafers, not worth their salt, whose one aim was to do as little as possible, and take the maximum time over it. There were eight apprentices, nice lads, each of whom had paid sixty guineas premium for the privilege of doing men's work, and were expected to learn how intuitively, for no one ever showed them anything—no, not even how to live decently in their den of the half-deck. These boys were really the backbone of the ship, for being all decently brought up young fellows they had not yet learned the vicious root-idea which is sapping the heart out of our workers—viz., that a man's duty to himself is to study how best he can get money without working for it, and that his highest aim in life should be to give as little as possible in labour for the wages he receives.

In consequence of this wretched condition of things on board there was something very like a collapse of all the energies (not many at the best of times) of the crew. According to the novelists who write of the sea from the abyss of utter ignorance of sea conditions, the crew should now have raided the 'spirit-room' (there isn't such a place in the great majority of merchant ships), and fearful scenes of bloodshed and anarchy would have ensued. As a matter of fact, the whole situation was peculiarly sordid and commonplace. There lay the great cumbrous tank upon the reef, canted to one side in a shamefaced manner as if acknowledging how much she owed to the sea for any gainliness of outline she ever possessed. Listlessly the crew slouched about the sloping decks, obeying such calls as were made upon them in a half or quarter hearted fashion and casting wistful eyes upon the sandy shore. They were a motley gang, and there was no prospect of immediate danger to life, only to property—and that, they knew, didn't matter a row of pins to anybody: they had obtained sufficient smattering of insurance problems to tell them that.

So that I think, apart from the disheartened condition of skipper and officers, it will be seen that the *Warrior Queen* was in evil case. How evil may be imagined from the fact that not one of her company had seen, far off on the other side of the little group, a trio of upright trees with branches crossing them at right angles with extraordinary regularity. When seamen neglect the obvious duty of looking around for another ship things are bad indeed. It was so in this case, and the first intimation that Captain

Smith had of there being any help at hand was the arrival alongside of a white double-ended boat with five swarthy-looking men at the oars and a tall devilishly handsome man erect in the stern. This boat rounded to under the *Warrior Queen's* stern in grand style, and before the dreaming fellows on board had realised that a visitor was coming Captain Da Silva had swung himself on board by the mizen chains, and with light elastic step had gained the side of Captain Smith on his broad quarter-deck. 'Good morning, sir,' said the new-comer. 'G' mornin',' sulkily replied the merchantman, for even in his dire distress he had the quaint old notion that he must show himself unapproachable in order to maintain his dignity. Dignity, forsooth! It's worth a great deal when a man has to make a hog of himself to keep it in evidence. 'Got a bit er trouble here, Cap'n?' said Da Silva. 'Yaas,' drawled Captain Smith; 'I'm afraid she isn't worth more 'n old iron price, if that. It's a bad job. Compasses wrong, y' know.' 'Oh don't say that,' interjected the Portuguese; 'I've got a bully crowd o' boys here all spoilin' fer a job. They'd ask nothin' better than t' git y' afloat ag'in.' 'You have—an' where, may I ask?' said Captain Smith haughtily. (You see, his dignity needed conserving.) Captain Da Silva waved his hand airily to where the *Grampus* lay just discernible as a three-masted ship far off to the southward. 'Thet's my ship,' said he, "'n' ef yer like t' come t' terms with me, I've a-got a gang aboard thar thet 'd snake yew eout of Purgatory itself. It's only a matter of terms.' 'Come down below, Cap'n,' said the now thoroughly aroused Mr. Smith. 'I want t' talk to you.' And

as they descended the polished teak companion, he laid his hand familiarly upon the swarthy visitor's shoulder, saying in a confidential tone: 'I 'spose yew're a wrecker of some kind, ain't you?' 'Me! oh, no, Captain. I'm jest a low-down whaling skipper, but I got a crew of boys a-spilin' fur somethin' t' do, and ef yew'll only say th' word, an' give me jes' a leetle bill on yewr owners, I'll bet we'll snake yewr ship eout o' this in short order.' By this time they had reached the cosy saloon of the big ship, and Captain Smith had summoned the steward to bring the whisky and cigars. Solemnly they drank to each other, and then Captain Smith broached his latent idea. His ship had run ashore through no fault of his. Couldn't he arrange for his new-found friend to take on a contract to get her off on the 'no cure, no pay' principle? Indeed he couldn't. In Captain Da Silva he had met a man as much his superior in business ability as he was in seamanship, and that scheme did not work for a moment. Well, then, couldn't he arrange for a liberal payment to the salvors with an equally liberal percentage to himself? —'for,' said he, 'my pay is only twelve pounds (sixty dollars) a month here.' The Portuguese shook his head decisively, as befitted a man who held the reins of the team.

'Naow looky here, Cap'n Smith,' drawled he, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. My best endeavours t' git yewr ship offn thisyer reef—yew givin' me a bill on yewr owners fur 2,500 dollars t' begin with, and a note t' th' effect that if I git her off the pay's double. As fur pussentidges, I don't know anything about 'em an' don't want. Ef yew mean that I'm to share

any of my earnin's with yew—well, yew're 'way off, 'n' thet's all there is to it. Ther' isn't anythin' o' that kind abaout *me*, young man, be sure o' thet.' And the two men sat and looked hard at each other. Not for long. The odds were too great, and with a heavy sigh Captain Smith went to his state-room producing paper and pen, and wrote out the agreement and the bill on his owners. This instrument, having been duly witnessed by the mate and steward, was carefully read and signed by Captain Da Silva, who then pocketed it, and springing to his feet declared himself ready to begin the carrying out of his contract. The merchant skipper, not at all used to such energetic proceedings, was taken 'flat aback,' as the sea saying has it, but said nothing, and Captain Da Silva departed with big leaps up the cuddy stairs. As soon as he reached the deck he shouted in a voice of thunder: 'My boat ready? *Grampus* boat's crew away!' Then without waiting for an answer he rushed to the gangway, and finding his men all in their places (they had not dared to come on deck) he flung himself over the side, and in one minute was on his way back to his ship, standing erect in the stern and urging the toiling rowers with many figures of profane speech to do better than their very best.

It was a long pull back to the *Grampus*, but not one of the rowers got a spell until she was reached. Well was it for them that their training had been so severe and thorough. And on reaching the side all hands were summoned to prepare the ship for the most arduous task she had yet undertaken. Sundry orders were given with reference to mooring-chains, hawsers, kedges, &c., and while the crew fled about

their tasks of filling those orders, the Captain dived below and knitted his brow over a calculation of the tides. He found (and it is noteworthy that he was able to detach his mind from all else while he worked out this important matter) that the 'springs' were due the following day at noon. This important matter settled, he replaced his books and sprang up the companion to the deck as if his life depended upon the ensuing minutes being husbanded with the most jealous care.

A few short, volcanic orders, and the windlass was manned, the cable came clattering in, and as soon as the anchor was ready to be broken out the sails were set, and the *Grampus*, obedient to the master mind, turned gently to the wind, while the few remaining links of cable were hove in, and she passed out of the tortuous reef channel seaward. The skipper stood by the helmsman, conning his vessel as if he had been acquainted with the navigation of those intricate channels all his life. It was only the usual whaler's style, but to the ordinary seaman it was nothing short of wonderful. The clumsy-looking old ship sidled out to sea as if she knew what was required of her, and presently the waiting men on board the *Warrior Queen* were astonished to see a short, thick-set, full-rigged ship come around the nearest point and suddenly bring to with a kedge about two miles away, waiting apparently for the word of command to do something totally unexpected. But there was no time wasted. Two boats were lowered from the new-comer, each double-banked, and under the pressure of foaming oars they ranged alongside the big helpless hulk, their crews leaped on board

headed by the Captain, who immediately demanded that all hands should be called and placed under his orders. There was a moment or so of hesitation on the part of the English ship's officers, but while they paused the new comers had the hatches off and had rigged a couple of single whips over each. Then as the original crew realised what was a-doing, they buckled to manfully, and soon the coal was flying overboard in an almost continuous stream. Something of Captain Da Silva's superhuman energy communicated itself to the crew of the *Warrior Queen*, for before many minutes had elapsed they were toiling as fiercely as any of the whaler's men, and without in the least understanding why they should thus do violence to their long-cherished leisureliness.

Through the thick haze of coal dust might have been seen Captain Da Silva and a chosen little body of men fiercely engaged in unbending the cables from the great anchors, getting up hawsers from below, and overhauling the long-neglected boat gear. The big wire rope, intended for towing purposes and therefore leading forward, was unwound and passed aft on the starboard side, while on the port side a length of cable was shackled on to the stoutest of the ship's hawsers, and ranged in readiness to be taken off when needed. Then Captain Da Silva, getting into his boat, carefully sounded the reef to see whether the *Warrior Queen* had, as so often happens, found her way alone along some special channel. He knew that many wrecks on coral reefs have done just that, and afterwards, owing to superficial observation of the surroundings, it has been taken for granted that some awful convulsion of nature in the shape of an earthquake wave or some-

thing of the sort must be held responsible for the vessel's reaching so apparently inaccessible a spot. After an absence of only an hour he returned, having found the channel by which the ship had entered, and buoyed it with sundry lengths of lead-line and 'black-fish' pokes, or bladders of the small cetacean known to whalers by that trivial name. Just a few minutes on board to see that the jettison of the coal was proceeding with as much vigour as possible under the circumstances, and then off again on board the *Grampus*. He caused her to be worked right into the channel he had found, but stern first and as easily as a barge is taken up a winding canal. Finally, when near enough for his liking, he had two hawsers attached to his bow anchors, and the latter dropped in the channel. These were veered away to their utmost length, which brought the stern of the *Grampus* near enough to the stern of the *Warrior Queen* to allow of the wire hawser and cable-bridled hawser being secured to the former. When all these preparations were complete he gave orders that all hands should rest so as to be capable of a supreme effort next day at noon, it now being about 10 P.M., and some five hundred tons of coal having been jettisoned.

After a good meal all round, the worn-out men went to their bunks—all except Captain Da Silva, who, calling upon his particular boat's crew, started at midnight for the long and perilous pull back to the islet where the sick were encamped. Threading the dangers of that terrible group of reef-rocks and sandbanks apparently was mere amusement to him, although at times it must have seemed to a novice as if nothing could save the frail craft from being

overwhelmed by the breaking of one of those vast swells over the jagged surface of a fringing reef, through one of whose openings they were passing. But this extraordinary man seemed to bear a charmed life, and, without shipping a drop of water even, the boat arrived at the camp in three hours from the time of leaving the *Warrior Queen*. Noiselessly she grounded on the smooth sand, light as a fawn the skipper sprang out, and in a few minutes had peered in at both tents and seen that all was silent as the grave, at which peaceful termination to his investigations he was apparently much annoyed. Returning to the boat, he caused an impromptu shelter to be rigged up by turning her over and spreading the sail over the upraised gunwale, and, creeping in under with his satellites, all were soon sound asleep ; not, however, before a huge black bottle had been impartially passed round.

At daylight the skipper awoke and went to visit his sick, finding, to his great satisfaction, that several of them were sufficiently recovered to be brought on board—they could do something, if it was only holding on the hawsers abaft the windlass. To Priscilla he said nothing—he stood looking at her doubtfully for a few minutes, while she endured his gaze as if unconscious of it. Then he turned on his heel and departed, and in a few minutes the trembling steward reported to her that 'de Cappen, he make'n dem boat's crew pull fur sixty sure, ma'm ; dat boat jes' a-flyin'.'

He was back at the scene of salvage operations by ten o'clock, and found, as he had expected, that all hands were loafing about, waiting for him to come

and tell them what to do. But he said nothing about that, only gave orders for all square sail to be loosed on both vessels and set with as little delay as possible. For there was the usual sea breeze setting in, at no great rate it is true, but with every promise of being much stronger by noon. And it blew right fair for the channel, along which, if in any direction at all, the *Warrior Queen* must go. Nearer and nearer drew the critical moment, the tide rising rapidly. All hands were ordered to their stations, the *Warrior Queen's* crew being, with the exception of just sufficient to trim her yards in case of necessity, all on board the *Grampus* at the windlass. The breeze freshened as the tide rose, and a few minutes before noon Captain Da Silva gave orders for all his reinforced crew to heave away at the windlass for dear life. The powerful leverage of that great spread of canvas on both ships, aided by the strain on the hawsers applied at just the right time, gradually made itself manifest. The vast bulk of the *Warrior Queen* slowly rolled, shuddered, slipped, and with a long grinding groan she moved. Frantic yells arose from the windlass-men on board of the *Grampus*. They felt the weight yielding, and forgetting the danger of breaking the old-fashioned machine they were trying so hardly, redoubled their efforts.

Slowly, majestically, the big ship glided seaward, steered by the mate in response to the desperate signals made from the whaler, where the skipper was now in an almost insane state of excitement lest some fool should, at the last minute, spoil all his work. But no; gently the whaler increased her speed, followed clumsily by her tow, until, at 1.30

the rescued merchantman was able to turn and pursue her way alone. Before she did so, however, Captain Da Silva, having anchored his ship, hastened on board the saved vessel, and, shaking hands warmly with Captain Smith, bade him 'so long,' saying to himself as he did so: 'I guess yew want somebody to dry-nurse yew mighty bad. Don't matter to me, though. Five thousand dollars ain't half a bad day's pay, an' I guess I'll snake it in soon 's ever I git t' port. He ain't a bit t' be 'pended 'pon, that man.'

And, leaving the big ship to pursue her journey, the energetic rascal returned on board his own vessel, got under weigh and hastened back to his former anchorage, fully determined to get the rest of his ailing men on board, fit or not, and leave next day for sea. He reached the camp at sunset, anchored, and went ashore, finding that his wife was well on the way to complete recovery, and the rest of the poor fellows doing very well. So without any further delay, he caused the camp to be broken up, the invalids brought on board, and everything got in readiness for departure the following day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HUMANITY REWARDED

DOUBTLESS many of the superior persons, who, like Matthew Arnold, their high priest, have led sheltered lives, will, also like him, curl the lip of scorn at any sorely pressed human creature in his extremity of need lifting his heart in prayer to God for help. Let them do so, if it please them, while they may. For many thousands know most gratefully that prayer is indeed a perfect communication between man and his Maker, and is answered so fully and so frequently as to put all coldly logical or brilliantly poetical objectors entirely out of court. Who, indeed, would accept the evidence of a blind man as to the value of a certain picture, or of a deaf man upon the merits of an oratorio? Therefore, *pace* Matthew Arnold and his 'Self Help,' let me gratefully return to the comforted little company in that sorely bestead whale-boat. In the midst of that wilderness of kelp, with the awful hand of the gale pressing them back from the goal they so sorely desired, they yet felt a security, a peace such as can only accrue to those who, in a like position, know that underneath them are the Everlasting Arms.

Almost literally inch by inch they fought their way seaward. Much as they valued the smooth

which the kelp brought them, its hindering environment was terribly wearisome to the humanly limited strength. But doggedly they toiled on, often only half consciously, as squalls of sleet slashed savagely across their cowering faces and every fresh blast of wind beat at them as if it were the spirit of some malicious demon determined upon their destruction. Suddenly they emerged from the slimy smoothness of the kelp into the free dash of the great waves. And as they did so Mr. Peck, with a great voice, shouted, 'Now, boys, for y'r lives ; out oars an' pull jest a leetle bit ; perhaps we can histe a rag of sail and keep her away a bit presently. That's it—lift her, lift her ; oh, too good, boys, too good, one, two, three ; better 'n' better. I see the ship ! She ain't no distance off. Stick t' it, me hearties, give 'r all you got—that's y'r style.' In such wise did the fine fellow encourage his men, who were taking the last ounce out of themselves in their desperate fight with the forces of nature. And the passengers cowering in the bottom of the boat heard and saw not, endured dimly, dumbly ; until just as it seemed impossible that the overborne sailors could hold out any longer came the glorious cry of 'Boat ahoy !' A yell of thankful reply, and the great bulk of the ship materialised out of the darkness. A minute or two of breathless suspense as the boat swung off the wind, and then a blessed sense of security and calm as she surged up under the lee of the grand old tub, where all hands, by the light of the flaring try-works, were awaiting them. Life from the dead, fellow creatures welcomed back from out the gaping jaws of the grave —how glorious a sensation to true men ! And when

the whisper ran round that some of the saved ones were women there were chokings and dim eyes among these rough-looking but tender-hearted fellows, although comments were mostly limited to the commonplace expression, 'Poor things, poor things.'

Safely on board, and the boat hoisted into her place, Captain Hampden whispered an order to his mate to keep all the southing he could so as to get well clear of that awful pile of rock, still much too near for comfort. Then with a courtly old-world grace he led the way to his cabin, and begged his strangely shipped passengers to make themselves at home. The three quaint little figures revealed themselves as ladies—young, but haggard with anxiety and privation. Alone in the world, too. For the story of the lost ship from which they had escaped was just this, so bald and simple, yet so full of pathos to the imaginative mind. She was a huge four-master, with splendid passenger accommodation, bound for Australia, and specially recommended as affording a grand opportunity for a perfect sea trip for consumptives. So thirty poor wrecks of humanity, but possessing money enough to buy a chance of life, availed themselves of the opportunity, for, after all, the fare was much lower than in a fast steamer, and the attendance likely to be much better. But the crew! What agony the Captain endured as he found that sailing-ships were in such bad odour that men could not be obtained—that if he would get to sea at all he must needs ship men who hardly knew a cringle from a scupper-hole. However, this is one of the penalties a man must pay to-day when working his way up in a sailing-ship prior to taking charge in steam. And

Captain Weston paid it. Running the easting down, he found his handful of wastrels not merely incompetent, but afraid—a poor group of fellows whom no threats or bribes could make do their duty, while he had upon his heart the helpless passengers. So he ran her, recklessly as it appeared, really because he could do nothing else, and strained his heartstrings nightly as he looked up through the blackness at those great sails, and wondered what *would* happen should they blow away, for to take them in he knew was impossible.

Is it fair to put such a strain upon one man as this? I do not think so, yet most captains of our big sailing-ships must shoulder such a burden to-day, and for, at most, £200 a year. No wonder the Mercantile Marine is unpopular. Captain Weston endured his load almost helplessly in view of the season and the quality of his crew; and when, while snatching a few moments' sleep in his chart-room, he felt his ship go over, over, over, until on her beam ends, and knew that she had broached-to in the height of one of the southern gales, he gave a sigh almost of relief as knowing the worst. Out of the half-dozen boats he carried one succeeded in getting away with three ladies on board, whose charges, a consumptive father, uncle, and sweetheart, were practically killed by the shock. There were also two male passengers, the mate, and four seamen. And these were all the survivors of that awful mid-sea catastrophe, when a great ship, through bad steering, was thrown on her beam ends and, her decks bursting, sank like a broken cup in the midst of that lonely ocean.

For two days the surviving boat and her miserable freight managed to keep ahead of the hungry, following sea, until, in the blackness of the third night, when hope was well-nigh dead, she entered the kelp fringing Gough Island, and after a series of hair-breadth escapes the whole party succeeded in landing upon its frowning shores. There, for nearly three months, they had maintained life in semi-savage fashion, wondering whether they were doomed to spend the rest of their days there, when help came in the shape of the hardly beset *Xiphias*, and they were once more restored to a little world of living people.

With a sigh Captain Hampden bore up for Cape Town. It was much out of his way, and, besides, he was so far to the southward that it would be difficult to make the port, especially in such a sluggish old craft. But the idea of carrying those poor ladies on to the Mauritius, which was the only place that lay anywhere near his track whence they could be shipped home, was not to be thought of for one moment. And having decided upon what to do, he did it with all his heart, allowing no one to see what a struggle it had cost him. All sail was made, therefore, and the course set for Cape Town, the rescued mate and his four shipmates taking a vigorous part in the handling of the ship, so that the *Xiphias*' crew could finish their heavy task of securing the oil from their previous catch.

She was a mighty busy ship, as well as a happy one, for there was so much to do with the two and a half tons of baleen secured, after the oil was all stored below, that no one had any time of leisure.

This peculiar substance—‘whalebone,’ as we have agreed to call it—is really of the nature of dried gristle or soft horn, and when it is green—*i.e.*, newly taken from the whale—it needs constant care and labour in scraping, drying in the sun, and other trade treatment. Without this it soon becomes valueless, and, since it is so high-priced when properly cured, it is obviously the most important duty on a whale-ship to attend to it. But this duty tries the patience of all hands most sorely. In the present case, however, there were compensations. For, in the first place, Captain Hampden was not the man to keep his crew at other work all day and scraping, &c., whalebone all night ; and, secondly, a cheery whisper ran round the ship that he (the old man) intended landing the stuff at Cape Town for transhipment to market.

And then, to the great joy of the crew and the unbounded chagrin of the passengers, the ship ran one morning at daybreak into the midst of a vast school of sperm-whales, extending from one horizon to the other. Their numbers no man could calculate, any more than what stupendous stores of food must be necessary to feed such an army of monsters. Captain Hampden’s heart glowed with thankfulness that he had been by humanity turned thus far out of his intended course, and, in obedience to his newly born instinct, went away into a corner by himself and lifted up his heart, not merely in gratitude to God, but for wisdom, after all these years of experience, to do just the right thing in the manipulation of this great store so lavishly spread before him. It only took a minute or two (how simply and

quickly can we prefer our petitions and praises to the King of kings), and he was back again among his men, the guiding, ruling spirit of all. As if his plan of campaign had been laid out a week ahead, he apportioned to each officer his place in the coming struggle, took advantage of the presence of the passenger mate and four seamen to give them the handling of the vessel, and then gaily took the field himself with five boats, skipper leading.

It was an ideal day, the great sun just rising from the smooth ocean bed into an absolutely clear sky—clear from clouds, that is, but splashed with all the splendid colours of a tropical dawn, the glassy undulating sea-surface broken in all directions by the lolling masses of the sea monsters, each lazily exhaling his or her bushy tuft of vapour. Occasionally the heavenly silence was broken by a playful rush of a dozen or so of these colossal forms in some given direction, making the placid sea foam and curdle around their massive bodies as if it had suddenly met some newly risen rocks. Or a few sedate bulls would gravely invert themselves, and as if by a concerted movement slowly beat upon the sea with their great flukes, the gigantic strokes reverberating along the silent surface like the echoes of a distant cannonade.

Yes, they were a happy, placid company, recking not of evil, least of all apparently of the presence of those five small white things that, a hundred fathoms or so apart, were coming gliding among them, each with cruel points protruding from its front and glittering fiercely in the rays of the mounting sun. And before any attempt at flight could be made by one

member of that great company, the five boats were among them, each boat had singled out the largest victim near (for so had run the Captain's orders), and the slaughter had begun. Now while it is undoubtedly true that the sperm-whale is brave and will under ordinary circumstances fight for his life with a fury and sagacity not to be excelled by those of any mammal afloat or ashore, it is also quite true that occasionally, especially in large companies like the present one, sperm-whales will become panic-stricken, and, making not the slightest attempt either to fight or flee, will suffer themselves to be slain like a flock of silly sheep when the wolf leaps into the fold among them. The present was one of those occasions. Harpoons flew and lances flashed, the boats rode easily, hardly moving in any direction amid closely packed squads of utterly demoralised whales, and the sea speedily became foul with blood and oil. It needed all the skipper's power of command to call his men off, frantic as they were with the lust of killing, which overtakes the gentlest and most amiable of mankind once the first shudder of compunction has been overcome. But Captain Hampden's cool judgment realised that already—only one hour from lowering—sufficient work had been provided to last all hands, work as they would, until the odour of their spoil would become utterly intolerable, which is the principal drawback in sperm-whaling to taking full advantage of such an opportunity as the present one.

Reluctantly the boats drew each to her prey, unwillingly the officers ceased plying their lances among the aimlessly wandering monsters, and there

amid lanes of coming and going whales they laboured to attach their tow-lines to dead whale flukes, while the Captain, returning on board, took charge of his ship again, and aided by a gentle southerly breeze that had just sprung up, manœuvred her around in order to secure the spoil. It was a wonderful sight when all the great carcasses had been secured alongside to see the assembled hundreds—maybe thousands—of survivors surrounding the ship as if held there by some dread fascination they were unable to resist. Usually the sight or scent or presence of blood is sufficient to send them fleeing at the top of their speed to the four airts; but now was one of the exceptions, and in the clear sleeky water around the ship their vast bodies rolled and turned without apparent objective, until one of the passengers was fain to ask the skipper whether he did not think they were meditating an attack in force upon her. Captain Hampden laughed loud and long, for he had several times been privileged to witness a similar scene, and he knew that no more danger was to be apprehended from the presence of all those whales than there was from the coming of the thousands of sharks that in all the fury of their ravenous hunger were already tearing at the mighty carcasses secured to the ship.

Again was that ship's company involved in the most tremendous toil, but better fitted than before by experience, and unhindered by the awful prospect of imminent death by their vessel being dashed ashore. Moreover, the weather was beautifully fine as well as mild, the barometer stood steadily high, the sea was as smooth as it ever is in  $35^{\circ}$  S., and

there were seven willing additional hands. All the more willing because the skipper assured them that as soon as ever the cutting-in was accomplished he would make sail again for Cape Town, and that this splendid accession to his profits for the voyage would only hinder their progress for at most a couple of days. A ship's company all in the highest spirits, working as if their very lives depended upon the amount they did, with never a harsh word spoken ; every man, seaman or officer, bubbling over with cheerfulness and good temper, and seven splendid auxiliaries joining their forces as if the whole affair was a gigantic piece of fun. It was too. For as the capture of the whales had been the easiest on record for sperm-whales, the whole seven taken having been slain in less than one hour, so the weather was as perfect as the most exacting desire could make it. The little southerly breeze that had been so valuable in the getting of the spoil alongside had died completely away, and the only movement of the vessel, hardly noticeable, was due to an almost imperceptible westerly swell. As Mr. Pease said, 'Anybody 'd think we wuz ridin' snug in some harbour.'

As the weather was so propitious, every effort was directed at first to getting the whales beheaded, and the strange spectacle was to be witnessed of men hacking away at those great masses below them from little stages slung all round the ship, wherever a whale's head could be got at comprehensively. And all this to such good purpose that by sunset, although the men were not over-fatigued, the whole of the seven heads were off and floating astern at the ends of stout ropes, and one whale had been skinned

and his blubber carefully stowed below. A perfect illumination of the ship by means of cressets was devised, each of which, slung where it could be of the most service, was kept supplied with whale 'scrap,' or the blubber from preceding whales, from which as much oil had been boiled as possible. This is the only fuel used for boiling the oil, and as it blazes almost like a Lucigen light it makes a splendid illuminant as well. Besides, the glorious moon, a huge disc of blazing silver, made the night bright, enough to read quite small print—so bright, indeed, that although there was not a trace of cloud or mist, the pretty stars were hardly visible. So as soon as the well-earned supper was eaten a system was devised whereby ten men and two officers at a time should have two hours' sleep, there being then quite sufficient to handle the windlass and rip off the blubber.

Then the great night's work began. The rattling of the windlass pawls was incessant; there seemed to be no pause in the steady ascent of the great black-and-white blankets, and the shouting of orders, the cheerful gabble, and the roaring of the fires made a most pleasant tumult. In the midst of it all, after midnight, a voice was heard across the sea shouting, 'Ship ahoy! Want any assistance?' Mr. Pease, in charge at the time, roared back, 'No; why?' 'Thought ye was on fire. I'll send a boat on board.' And sure enough from a trim frigate, which had stolen up by the aid of the light upper airs, came a boat, full of sorely puzzled men, who had never witnessed a scene like it in their lives, and, having witnessed it, would never be likely to forget it. It

was only by the most careful piloting and obedience to the instructions shouted at them from the deck of the whaler that the boat was able to pick her way among those floating masses ; but, that difficulty successfully overcome, the officer in charge leaped on to the rail and stood gazing with wide-eyed wonder upon the deck. For, do what they would, the hardly pressed toilers had been unable to stow more than the blubber from two whales in the blubber-room, so that the blankets of three others were encumbering the deck and making it, to anybody but a whaleman, almost impassable.

The visitor clambered aft and introduced himself to Captain Hampden, newly awakened, as a lieutenant of H.M.S. *Griffon*, and apologised for intrusion, saying that he, with all the rest of his ship's company, could not help but believe that they were coming in the nick of time to the assistance of a vessel on fire. But he added, while he was glad to find that not the case, he was delighted to have had the opportunity of gazing upon such a scene, which his wildest dreams of sea-happenings had never before pictured. Then the skipper gave him the news of the rescue, and asked if it would be agreeable to have the passengers transferred. This, however, they themselves demurred to, feeling no doubt that such an opportunity as now presented itself for gaining experience was not to be lightly given up ; and, besides, they found that there would be no saving of time, as the warship was bound to Ascension. So, after a hearty shake hands all round, the gallant officer swung himself over the rail and departed, primed with material for yarns for years to come

That night passed with almost the rapidity of a sound sleep, but its hours had been so well utilised that when the lovely morning broke and gilded the haggard faces of the toilers, all the carcasses had been disposed of and the great heads were ranged alongside ready for dissection. Now these whales, though large, were by no means of the largest, and therefore it occurred to the skipper to test his lifting-gear to the utmost. So he had the 'junk' or snout point of the first cut off, hoisted on deck, and secured ; then, hooking both tackles on to the remainder of the head, all hands buckled on to the windlass, and, although the old vessel listed dangerously, succeeded in bringing the great mass on deck. Now for activity. A long rip fore and aft the case ; ten willing hands dipping their buckets at once into the reservoir of spermaceti. Plenty more behind passing it away into the tanks. Wonderful ! In twenty minutes it is empty, and at a word from the skipper as the ship rolls to starboard, two or three swift spade blows release the empty head and it slides massively into the sea. Hurrah ! Now for another. Will these men never tire ? Apparently not. But the skipper's brow is knotted with care. Receptacles for the bland spermaceti, semi-liquid as it is, are beginning to fail. 'Cooper, what shall we do ? Tanks are all full, Kain't ye git us some pipes ?' 'Gimme three hands, sir, 'n' I'll git y' all yew want.' 'Bully fur you, cooper. Jim, Rube, Manuel, go with the cooper and help him.' And in half-an-hour two 336-gallon pipes are ready to receive the rest of the spermaceti : the difficulty is met.

Four P.M. sees the *Xiphias* so utterly blocked

from knight-heads to cabin skylight with blubber that the passenger seamen look solemnly at one another and wonder what will be the end of it all. They do not know how recently this crowd have disposed of an almost similar difficulty, with an awful shore grinning up at them from close a-lee. A faint westerly breeze springs up, the passengers are asked if they will make sail, and as they gladly assent, away goes the grand old tub under every stitch, smoking like two or three steamers rolled into one, and leaving behind her a wide wake of smoothness from exuding oil—for she is fast becoming more like an oil-saturated sponge than a ship. But nothing daunts her crew. They are happy. Visions of a glorious ending of their voyage, of farms bought, and a position among their stay-at-home neighbours proudly pre-eminent, fill their minds and make them call up the last ounce of energy to cut a horse-piece or turn the mincer-handle when they have felt for the last half-hour that it was impossible to put in another stroke.

These visions come to all but Rube. For of him it may truly be said that he lives in the present. The past has no memories for him, the future no anticipation. To all the cheery chatter of his ship-mates anent their plans for the future he turns a disinterested ear. When they say, 'Wut *you* goin' t' do, Rube ole man, w'en yew gits home?' he replies solemnly, 'Only God knows. I ain't got no plans. I want Him to 'range things fur me, then I know they'll be all right. Anyhow, I know I kain't be any happier than I am 'mong yew dear fellers—I never thought 't would be possible t' be so happy 's I am naow. But, dear chaps, ef I wuz yew I wouldn't go

buildin' too many castles. Y' see at fust, yew know, they're only castles in th' air, but ef yew go on buildin' an' buildin', bimeby they gets t' be so real t' yew that w'en yew finds 'at yew kain't build 'em indeed, th' disappointment is awful.' So he talked, and, good-naturedly, they bantered him. And meanwhile the great work was being well done ; so well done that two days before they entered Table Bay, and passing close under Robben Island, anchored well clear of the mail steamers' track into the harbour, the last trace of foulness was removed from the old ship—she looked clean as a ship should look. She did not smell sweet, but that, alas ! could not be helped. In those warm climates it is only possible to avoid bad smells in a whaler that has no luck, and the *Xiphias* certainly had redeemed her apparent bad luck at last ; for she had only been out seven months, and now she had on board 800 barrels of sperm oil and 550 right-whale oil, besides two and a half tons of baleen, so that her catch at the market price of that day may be invoiced thus :—

800 barrels of sperm oil = 80 tons, at £100 =	
\$500 per ton . . . . .	£8,000 = \$40,000
550 barrels of black oil = 55 tons, at £20 =	
\$100 per ton . . . . .	£1,100 = \$5,500
2½ tons, bone at £1,500 =	
\$7,500 per ton . . . . .	£3,750 = \$17,750
	£12,850 = \$63,250

An ideal trip so far, and yielding even to the poor holder of the 250th lay, a comfortable sum of £51 8s. = \$256·50, of course subject to deduction for slops, tobacco, advance, &c.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A GREAT BLOW

MANY and terrible are the temptations which await the striving Christian, whatever his or her spiritual age may be. It is a moot point whether they (the temptations) are felt more severely by the babe in Christ in the first fervour of the new life, or by the mature Christian who is insensibly led to feel that he or she has attained unto a firm standing in the Faith. But one thing is, or should be, beyond controversy, and that is that no fiercer temptations assail any man than those which await the newly converted sailor, who has begun, in the solitude of the ocean and its sweet freedom from the allurements of shore vices, the upward way. He has been born, and has grown up to a certain Christian stature in a state of peaceful freedom from the evils of shore life, and has almost come to regard them as belonging to a previous state of existence to which he can never return. Then, when he is suddenly plunged headlong into them again he is in great, very great, danger of a relapse that may give him an agonising season of remorse. But I must not carry this digression too far. I only wish, in beginning this chapter, to point out how dire were the perils awaiting the crew of the *Xiphias*, many of whom were only, in the imitative way common to the

majority of human beings, behaving as they saw the general sense of their little community would have them behave, and not at all from any conviction as to the necessity of such behaviour to their peace or from any inward urging whatever.

It is, however, safe to say that such considerations troubled no one on board the ship at all. Every man was in an overflowing state of happiness at again anchoring in a civilised port after the long and weary cruise and the many hardships and dangers encountered. Every man, too, with the exception of Rube, was half-intoxicated with a quite lawful pride in his achievements during the past two months. All remembered how helplessly, ignorantly, and painfully they had begun the voyage, traced easily the educational way they had come, mentally visualised vividly each heroic detail, and gradually lost sight of the great central fact of it all, the Fatherly care of God. Therefore, when, the next day after arrival, the rescued passengers returned on board with urgent requests to the Captain that he would allow them the privilege of entertaining the crew ashore as a slight return for benefits received, all who could be spared on that day, except Rube, joyfully availed themselves of the permission readily given and went ashore.

They were royally welcomed at one of the principal hotels by the rescued ones, some of whom had wired home and received in reply advices enabling them to draw upon the local banks for all moneys needed. They were entertained far too well, for two-thirds of them returned on board drunk and quarrelsome, and for the first time that voyage

the foc'sle was the scene of a riotous conflict, in the midst of which Rube moved like a strong apostle of peace, able, as well as eager, to enforce quietude upon the most unruly, even though it involved a considerable amount of what some weak-minded people might call brutality. The lesson taught by this episode was not without its valuable effect upon those who had remained on board. With a self-sacrifice entirely laudable, they refused to go ashore at all. This may not, probably will not, be assessed by my readers at its proper value ; but, oh, if landsfolk could only realise the intense longing for a run ashore which seizes upon sailors after being cooped up on board ship for seven or eight months, it would be understood. Truly, Reuben and the skipper had done their best to give the ship-keeping crew such amusement as was possible, and the best shore food, fresh beef, mutton, and vegetables that could be procured had been provided.

Table Bay swarms, or did swarm, with a splendid species of crustacean known as 'craw-fish,' many of which grow to a huge size, weighing several pounds, and have a flavour in no way inferior to that of a lobster. There was great sport in catching these in impromptu nets made of rope-yarn meshed upon hoops and baited with bones, and even greater satisfaction in knowing that they would live for months in tanks of salt water frequently renewed. Then there was ordinary fishing, or, perhaps, I should say extraordinary fishing, of the schnapper, the cod, and other fish which swarm around the southern extremity of Africa almost unmolested. And sailors love fishing, though scarcely

any class of men living within reach of fishable waters get less of it.

So quite pleasantly the time passed away—the four days during which Captain Hampden found it possible to sell his baleen and tranship it, and to expend a liberal sum in fresh food, vegetables, and live-stock. On the fifth morning, at daybreak, the cry of 'Man the windlass!' rang along the deck of the *Xiphias*, and all hands responded. But, unhappily, most of those who had been ashore did so very unwillingly. The memory of their spree was secretly most alluring ; they had tasted illicit delights again, and were lamenting the deprivation of them. Thus they were sullen, unwilling, and miserable. Vainly did Rube exert all his simple arts to rouse them out of themselves, to cheer them. They would not be cheered ; they hugged their misery and almost infected several of their shipmates.

But the work was going on, all unconsciously the best cure was being applied, and by nightfall, with their fine old ship heading northward for the Mozambique Channel before a fine following breeze, they had gone much farther than they were aware of on the road to repentance and recovery. By repentance I do not mean that spurious sentiment which is really sorrow for one's inability to go and repeat former sins or excesses, disgust and annoyance at being compelled to reap what one has sown, but a comprehensive change of mind with reference to one's former behaviour, a distrust of one's own powers of resistance to the drawings of evil, and a determination to trust for deliverance from them to Almighty God. A simple definition, perhaps, but

one that I know is far too often neglected or wilfully misunderstood.

Day succeeded day in perfect loveliness of weather and peace on board. The routine of the ship had fallen easily back into its accustomed grooves, and opportunity had been taken to renew all the wastage that had been made in the general equipment of the ship and boats by reason of the recent heavy demands made upon it. But no whales were seen. Eager eyes scanned the wide sea for every moment of the daylight, but nothing was seen of any value. Still, the previous sense of irritation and almost hopelessness was not there, could hardly be, since so great an accession of profit had been made during the last two months; a haul that, as Captain Hampden gratefully admitted, might not have been made on some voyages during the first two years. But as day succeeded day and week followed week, there came upon all hands a querulous desire to question the wisdom which had brought the ship into a part of the ocean where everything desirable was found except the one central object of the voyage: profit. As watch followed watch under those lovely skies, the watchers became listless, careless, their attitude at the mastheads showed how weary they had become of the fruitless gaze across the wide sea-plain. And the wise skipper, who, as a skipper should, carefully noted all the symptoms of discontent, gradually tightened the somewhat relaxed disciplinary fibres, and had many things done which, under the pressure of whaling, might quite safely have remained undone. The recently obtained cargo was overhauled and re-stowed, the reeking hold was

thoroughly cleansed, and although nothing was ever undertaken which could not be dropped at one minute's notice, had whales appeared, an enormous amount of valuable work was accomplished, and that, too, without any friction whatever. In addition to the work of the ship, the Captain unofficially encouraged the men to undertake in their leisure moments the making of 'scrimshaw,' the name given to *objets-d'art* (?), fabricated of ivory and bone, and calling out all the latent mechanical genius possessed by the men.

To this end, foreseeing an easy, quiet time, he had caused several jaw-pans of the sperm-whale to be set aside and towed astern in order that they might bleach to a dazzling whiteness. All the teeth had been saved and pickled in barrels of strong brine, and a considerable number of the shorter blades or laminæ of baleen had been retained when the bulk of it was transhipped at Cape Town. Word was passed forward that any man who felt inclined might have for the asking such of these materials as he chose in order to try his hand at curio-making ; and the carpenter, although, like most good workmen, he would not lend his tools, never refused to saw off a length of jawbone for a walking-stick, or cut up into rough pieces the bleached bone, for any man who asked him. Nor did he make any favour of showing a man how to make his own tools out of old knives, files, rasps, or even sail-needles. This amiability had great results, for before long practically all hands were engaged upon this fascinating hobby, and, emulating one another, were turning out some really beautiful pieces of work in carved ivory, bone, and

baleen. Some of the sticks were quite works of art. A length of, say, three feet by one inch square, sawn from a jaw-pan after it had been subjected to a long tow astern, would be tightly lashed down to a spar in the sun so that it would dry perfectly straight. Then, by the aid of a 'cutter' or rasp, softened in the fire and filed into deep ridges with cutting edges, it would be worked down into a rough roundness of outline. By the aid of other equally primitive tools the stick would then be gradually fashioned into the semblance of a rope, with 'worming,' or a much smaller rope twisted into its lays—a form of art which is highly interesting, as having been practised by sailors from very remote days. Three years ago, when staying at Repton School, I was shown over the ruins of the ancient abbey there, and in the recently unearthed crypt, dating back to Anglo-Saxon times I was told, there were four monolithic pillars of stone supporting the roof, each of which was carved into the same semblance of a rope with 'worming' in its lays. Also at a great country house where I stayed last year, whose noble and hospitable owner made a hobby of collecting books on ancient art, I saw some superb illustrations in colour of ancient croziers, upon which were carved in ivory or worked in precious metals the universally used 'Turk's-head' of the sailor, which has not altered one jot of its details down to the present day through all those hundreds of years.

But to return to our stick-maker. At one end of the stick about eight or ten inches would be cut away until only a slender square rod of about three-eighths of an inch thickness remained; upon this

would be threaded medallions of ivory, baleen, silver (quarter-dollars), ebony, and coco-tree wood. An albatross head or some similarly well-known object would be patiently carved and secured on top, and the whole stick was then polished, first with fine sand, then with powdered pumice-stone, and finished with chalk and oil. And really, when completed, many of these pieces of work would have made no bad show in an industrial exhibition, especially if the primitive tools could have been shown with them. Besides this fascinating pursuit, there were several others tacitly encouraged by the skipper, such as model-making, gymnastics, swimming (on calm days), and, of course, fishing. And thus gradually what had threatened to become a painful set-back to all of them turned out to be a veritable blessing, a halcyon time which many remembered all their lives after with the most tender regret.

But still they were not earning anything, and after their experience on the other side of the Cape they began to feel as if their fortunes were already made. They did not realise the vastness of the ocean and the tiny little circle, after all, that their outlook gave them from the mastheads. And in spite of the noble bounty offered by the skipper of twenty-five dollars to whoever should 'raise' a sperm-whale, it was very hard, to hang up there for two hours in that blazing sun and keep one's attention fixed upon one's business. At last, however (eleven weeks having passed since they left Cape Town), it happened to be Rube's masthead at daybreak—that is to say, shortly after 5 A.M. With his usual pleasant alacrity he swallowed his coffee and sprang

into the fore-rigging at the cry from aft, 'Man mast-heads!' As he went MacManus said jestingly, 'Reubin, darlin', ef yez do be raisin' sperm-whales O'll share th' bounty wid yez.' 'Yew shall that,' replied Rube gaily, 'an' everybody else as well ef I know myself.' As he went springingly aloft his eye dwelt lovingly upon the marvellous colouring of the sea, the ever-changing sequence of shades reflected from the glory above ; and his heart filled with loving worship, for there is no education in appreciative observation of God's wonderful works like an intimate acquaintance with Him. When he reached the topgallant-yard he saw the great glowing arc of the sun's upper limb just shedding a long line of blazing gold along the horizon, as if it could not contain all its store of glory, but must needs let some run freely on every hand. And as Rube climbed into his perch the awful majesty of the whole orb swung clear of the sea, and ocean and sky blazed ineffably, blindingly upon Rube's sight, making him for a moment veil his face in his hands and murmur a few disjointed words of praise.

Never in all his experience had he seen so glorious a sunrise. He could not help feeling an intense desire for more ability to appreciate its marvels, for more power to praise, more capacity for gratitude. And then as his eyes swept the horizon round, remembering his duty, he saw immediately beneath the sun's disc a curious peak, black, but edged with flame, which gave him the impression of its being some gigantic mountain top upon which the sun had been resting, and now was rising after it in readiness to receive it if it should fall. So strong was the

impression that it made him shudder in spite of himself and turn away. As he did so, broad on the port beam about five miles away rose the well-known figure of a sperm-whale exhaling a great volume of vapour diagonally from his spiracle and sending before his blunt head a perfect cascade of diamond spray. One moment's pause, and from Rube's deep chest burst the startling whalers' call, at which the previously half-awakened decks below burst suddenly into seeming life. Not one minute was lost, for the crew were in the highest state of efficiency and eagerness. Only two boats were lowered, for the whale had no fellow; he was apparently one of those morose old bulls that had been ejected from his overlordship of the school he had led so long and was doomed to wander lonely till the end. One drawback there was to the chase; it was almost a flat calm, and at such a time approach to a lone sperm-whale is exceedingly difficult. His senses (whatever they are, they are not like ours) are so acute that unless there be a little sea on, something that by its natural sounds may render the splash of an oar or the rattle of a rowlock inaudible, the whale will almost certainly be alarmed and make good his escape. But as they were paddling with the utmost caution in his direction, a puff of wind darkened the water and at the same time sent a cold shiver through all hands. The mate recovered from his surprise first, and his hoarse whisper ran through the crew's ears: 'In paddles, step mast, quietly now.' He was obeyed in swiftness and silence, and the second mate, following the example, had his sail up almost as soon. Then, as the graceful boats glided noiselessly across the just rising ripples, all hands had

leisure to look about them, and to their intense uneasiness they saw that the whole aspect of the heavens was changed. The colour of the blessed sun itself had faded from glowing gold to a stale, sickly, greenish hue, and the morning cheerfulness of the sky was replaced by a dreary, leaden blue, to which the sea had responded by turning almost black. And it was so cold. The sun seemed at once to have been shorn of his beams and his power of distributing warmth. He still shone, it is true, but as if through a veil of some deadly mist depriving him of all his beneficent influences. Yet there was no vapour whatever visible.

The mate, however, alone of the little company, seemed entirely unconscious of any change in the weather. With his eyes fixed upon the supine monster ahead he steered the boat as if he were part of it, as if, indeed, he were enduing it with some of his own personality. Occasionally, it is true, he cast furtive glances at the second mate's boat, but that was only to see whether he was keeping as far ahead of that officer as etiquette demanded. And as the breeze freshened the lively craft began leaping gamsomely over the infant waves, nearing the whale at a great rate. At last ! The harpooner, a lean American from Nantucket, rose stealthily to his feet, balancing the clumsy-looking weapon as if it were a feather in his right hand, and methodically arranging the coils of stray line on the little forward deck or 'box' of the boat. She made one last spring forward ; then, with a great swooping curve, graceful as that of an albatross, she glided alongside the whale, and two harpoons flew from Walter's sinewy fingers into the

whale's body. She passed into a little offing of safety as the sail was brailed in, but the whale wasted no time or strength in fruitless struggle to free himself of the irons. He apparently gathered all his powers together and fled to windward through the rapidly rising waves, heeding not the weight behind him more than as if it had not existed. He went so fast, indeed, and so dead end on to the sea that the accomplishment of the boat's clearance was a task of uncommon difficulty, taking nearly thrice the usual time. And when it was finished neither the companion boat nor the ship was to be seen. More, the black pinnacle of cloud noted by Rube at sunrise had now overspread fully one half of the heavens. The other half had a menacing shade, not of cloud, but the shadow of the great eastern mass, and yet behind the gloom there was the suggestion of an unearthly glow. No one could say why or how the ship had disappeared, but not a sign of her was visible. A strange fear fell upon all, even Rube, who by virtue of his great strength had the midship thwart (the heaviest oar) in the mate's boat. Instinctively the mate came aft and got out the compass; but, except to tell in which direction the whale was going, which they already knew was something near east, its indications were of little value—they had no bearing of the ship. And the whale went steadily on into the gathering darkness.

Meanwhile, on board the ship signals of recall were being frantically made in the hope that the fast boat might see them. Mr. Peck did see, and in less than half an hour was safe alongside again, his boat hoisted, and his men putting all their energies into

the preparations to meet the coming cyclone. The ship was now between the Seychelles and the Saya de Malha Bank, having been gradually working north and east from the Mozambique Channel upon finding that usually prolific hunting ground so barren of result. And consequently she was now in one of the very worst places in the whole ocean for meeting with those awful circular storms which are variously known as hurricanes, cyclones, or typhoons, according as they are experienced in the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, or the China Sea, but which are all the same kind of terrible natural convulsion, beneficent in their after-effects undoubtedly, but while they last filling most men with the conviction that the end of all things is at hand. Still, so staunch and seaworthy was the *Xiphias*, in common with most of her sisters built by those old-fashioned, methodical descendants of the old Puritans in New England, that the near approach of such a cataclysm would have given Captain Hampden very little additional uneasiness but for the fact of his mate's boat being away, lost to sight, and of his own inability to follow it up when once the meteor burst, which it was now evidently upon the point of doing. Nothing, however, could be left undone that ought to be done for the safety of those remaining on board, and no time wasted in vain regrets ; so for two or three hours all hands were kept at full pressure putting extra lashings upon everything movable—double gaskets, 'marling' down the sails, hoisting the boats as high as they would go to the davit-heads, and there securing them with all the skill available. Also a quantity of food was hastily cooked (the *Xiphias*, like most of

those old ships, carried little canned provisions) and stored where it could be got at without opening hatches or depending upon a lighted fire. Everything, in fact, was done that skill and forethought could suggest or urge to, and then the men were called aft. All hands stood facing the gallant old skipper as with head bare he steadied himself against the skylight.

'Men,' said he, 'we've kem up agenst big trouble, for a boat's crew of our shipmates air a-missin', an' only God He knows whether we sh'l ever see 'em agen. I feel a'most heart-broken at lettin' 'em go; but, men, I'd no idea 'at thishyer hurrican'—fur hurrican' it's a-goin' t' be, there's no possible doubt o' that—wuz a-comin' on so sudden. An', besides, yew all know how eager all han's wuz t' git some whale after eour long spell athout seein' one. Thar's no denyin' the fact, eour shipmates air in terrible danger. We're in danger, too, fur these hurrican's is enough t' make the bravest man 'at ever lived feel quaky t' his very soul. But we've a grand ship under eour feet, an' we've a-done all thet man k'n do to make her ready fur the great fight thet's a-comin'. Naow we've a-got another duty t' perform. In thet boat beside Mr. Pease, as good an officer 's ever trod a deck 'r hove a lance, an' Walter his harpooner, also one ov th' very best, and MacManus, Joey, and Manuel, all good, sterlin' men as all th' crew is, thar's Rube Eddy. Thet man's taught us all lessons we needed worse than any of us knew. By his example he's shamed us into bein' better men, an' every one of us is happier then we could 'a' ben if we hadn't known him. Already I feel at the thought of losin' him 's if I don't care t' live

myself, an' I know thet all of you 'r feelin' with me how great a blessin' he's ben t' us aboard this ship. So I ask you all t' kneel down like men an' pray each in your own fashion fur Rube an' his fellows in th' boat; thet in this fearful time, God, who kin do anything, may be with 'em t' save, and thet He may see fit t' bring us all together again. An' if not, to make us all what Rube Eddy often prayed we might be—good men, ready t' live 'r die as it should please God, but whichever it is, to keep unbroken the image of God in us. Let's pray.'

All hands fell on their knees, and there, in the gathering darkness, these wanderers from many lands, uncouth, ignorant, careless seafarers, each in his own way silently pleaded with an unmistakably present God for the safety of the boat's crew, and all added, 'especially Rube.' Occasionally an ejaculation which could not be suppressed burst forth, but for the space of about a quarter of an hour, except for the voice of the wind like the growing wailings of a tortured spirit, and the continual mutter of the thunder, there was no other sound. Then, as if at a given signal, the skipper lifted up his voice in the sublime old Apostles' Prayer, the Amens were fervently murmured, and with perceptibly strengthened hearts the crew dispersed to their several duties or resting places, and thick darkness clothed them as with a garment, shutting out all the view of sea and sky.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CYCLONE

ALTHOUGH all hands had dispersed and half of them were free to seek their berths, they could none of them go below. A great awe, not to say fear, was upon them, for none of them save the skipper and some of the officers had ever witnessed the upheaval of the sea and down-pressing of the heavens which were now imminent, and the coming thereof exercised a fearful fascination upon them. They huddled in groups, only whispering an occasional word, and waited for they knew not what. Yet all had a feeling that it must be the Trump of Doom. As yet the wind had not attained any great force, but the motion of the ship was exceedingly uneasy, for the ocean is so responsive to the power of the wind that long before a gale which is somewhere raging has reached a ship, she will often be most violently tossed by big waves coming sweeping towards her, and this without any barometrical warning that can be noticed. Nay, it sometimes happens that after several hours of anxious waiting for the expected gale, with almost every stitch in the ship close furled, the restless sea will again quiet down, the filminess will disappear from the sky, and serene weather will once more prevail : the gale has either blown itself out or has

by a very well understood meteorological event been diverted from its original course into a totally new one.

None of these things, however, was known to or noticed by the crew of the *Xiphias*. They felt the pall above descending lower and lower until they could imagine its inky folds resting upon the mast-heads ; they heard the wailing and moaning of the wind, rising to an occasional wild shriek, as if impatient to begin the elemental strife ; they experienced the peculiar sensation inseparable from the environment of an atmosphere surcharged with electricity ; and they were obliged to hold on to keep themselves from being thrown off their feet by the unnatural, unexpected lurches of the puzzled ship. But it is fair to them to say that through all their apprehensions for the next few hours they felt most for their half-dozen shipmates in that frail boat, far away in the awful darkness, doomed to face the fiercest conflict of wind and wave known to seafarers, all unsheltered even by a little deck. Then came a new terror. The accumulation of electric fluid all around them, having become greater than the atmosphere could hold, commenced to discharge itself in blinding streaks of vari-coloured flame, which quiveringly ran about the blackness overhead and almost seemed to light up the black heaps of water rising and falling without order all around them. Every yard-arm, masthead, davit-head—in fact, every point, even to their own heads—gleamed palely with latent electricity, and strange sensations as of pricking roughened all the surfaces of their bodies. Some became numbed with fear, others wished they could be so.

And then—it was almost a relief—with a roar as of ten thousand lions mad with hunger, the full hurricane burst upon them. Where it struck them none knew, or what the ship did when she felt it ; for whether she was beneath the sea or above no one could tell. The awful blast ripped off the surface of the sea, and spread it through the air so that sight, speech, almost breath became impossible. But they all noticed that, although the ship beneath their feet seemed as if she was being hurled through space, she was now quite steady ; the drunken uncertain motion she had previously been suffering from had altogether ceased, for under that pressure of wind no sea could lift its head. I said there was almost a sense of relief, and this is really true, for now it did not appear possible that matters could become worse. Men's minds refused to entertain the possibility of any increase in the force of the wind, and all felt dimly that any change now must be for the better—that the hurricane was doing its worst.

The skipper, aft by the useless wheel, with the two mates near him, endured like the rest. Having done all that was humanly possible, and commended himself and his charge to his Father, he had now but to set his teeth, bend his head, and bear in patience, awaiting without a tremor the manifestation of God's will concerning him. There was a certain indefinite satisfaction in having his two mates near him—the same feeling that the other members of the crew had in being huddled together like sheep on the edge of a cliff when the gale howls furiously landward and sweeps the downs like the breath of a destroying angel. In fact, neither Captain Hampden nor his

officers took the trouble to think now. They just let their mental powers lie dormant, having used them at the right time to the best advantage, and being quite ready to exercise them again when any good could thereby be done.

And now, what of those brave men so perilously cut off from their ship, left to themselves in the midst of such potentialities of destruction that camping out unsheltered and unarmed in the heart of an Indian jungle would have been safety itself by comparison? For a time, while the whale kept his unswerving and unfaltering rush into the blackness ahead, Mr. Pease's energies and thought seemed solely concentrated upon the means of compassing the death of his gigantic steed—any ideas concerning his own danger or that of his crew did not seem to find admission to his mind. After satisfying himself that the whale was holding a straight course he called upon all hands to put forth a supreme effort to get up near enough to the monster, and make some feasible attempt at fatally wounding him. And they, seizing the tow-line and straining every sinew to the work, found that they could actually gain upon him a little, although the sprays coming over the bows threatened every now and then to swamp them. But gradually they found their task becoming easier, and although the thickening gloom chilled their hearts they encouraged one another with shouts of 'There she feels it,' 'Hand over hand, hearties,' 'Walk her up to him!' 'He's our whale,' &c. And suddenly the mate yelled at the utmost strain of his lungs, 'Lay off—lay her off, Walter; lay off, fur God's sake!' Nobly Walter responded; the light craft sprang off sideways under the pressure of

the great steer oar and Walter's straining muscles, and the whale's huge flukes, brandished high in air, came down with a crash like thunder, and smote the water just a yard or two abaft the after oar. But that blow cost the whale his life. For the boat shot up alongside of him, and in towards his side withal, and at the same moment Mr. Pease, taking deliberate aim, sent a bomb-lance point blank into the great body. Almost before the muffled report from within told that the destructive weapon had exploded, a hand-lance had followed it, and slid up to its pole within the vast black mass.

Either of those terrible wounds had been sufficient to kill, and the two combined had the effect of bringing the whale to a sudden stop, when, with a long expiration, like the escaping steam from a water-loaded syren, he gasped out his life and was still, save for the easy motion communicated to his huge carcass by the waves. So sudden was his death that the usual tremendous convulsion which takes place when these leviathans die was totally absent. As soon as it was evident that he *was* dead, Mr. Pease, rising to the height of his responsibilities, and realising how short a time was left during which anything might be done, caused two more harpoons to be driven into the whale's side near the first two, but bridled to the main line. Then allowing about fifty fathoms drift he cut the tow-line, and veering away to the tail succeeded with very great difficulty in getting a hole cut through its thickest part, and the end of the tow-line rove through it. That accomplished, the boat was hauled back again to a position midway between the whale's tail and its head, the lines made well fast,

and the men told to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted by crouching low in the bottom of the boat, and arranging the sail so as to keep off just a little of the spindrift that was already beginning to fill the air.

It was now quite dark, although but little after noon ; the sea was in that curiously undecided state before-mentioned, and the mate knew very well that at any moment the full power of the hurricane might burst upon them. Yet, strange as it may seem to landsmen or even ordinary sailors, he had by no means lost hope, neither had Walter. Both of them knew from long experience, and not theoretically, how splendid a breakwater is made by a dead whale. Both of them had time and time again owed their lives to the shelter afforded by one in the midst of such stupendous seas as are encountered in the Southern Ocean, where unhindered the lone sea sweeps round the globe, and consequently both felt that even in the present apparently hopeless circumstances they might yet be found living when the hurricane had passed and left the ocean bestrewn with the wreckage of many a score of noble ships. I think it is not generally known on land how magical (there is really no other word to describe it) is the power exercised by oil upon the sea. A little oil spilt upon the water during the prevalence of the roughest gale makes a tiny oasis of smoothness, around which the most gigantic waves rear their furious crests in vain in the endeavour to encroach upon it. 'Oil upon the troubled waters' has long been a paraphrase for the gentle work of the peacemaker, but it is much more than that—it is a scientific expression of fact ;

and since shipmasters (being, as I am never weary of pointing out, the most conservative of men) have taken to using oil, as it should be used, for the purpose of stilling the angry waves, the number of shipping disasters that have been averted is past all counting. It is safe to say that if, wherever any breakwater, pier, or similar structure is exposed to the fury of stormy seas, a large perforated pipe were to be laid on the sea-bed a few yards seaward of the foundations and surrounding them, through which in time of storm oil might be pumped at high pressure, we should never have any of those costly works destroyed by the impact of the waves at all ; for they (the structures) would be surrounded by a ring fence of smoothness beyond which, no matter how fierce their anger, the great waves could never pass.

Now, a whale is a natural reservoir of oil, and, whether alive or dead, he always has around him an area of calm induced by the exudations from his skin. Therefore, when we read of 'whales taking refuge in sheltered bays from the fury of gales,' we may be held blameless for curling the lip of derision, and wondering what manner of fools they are who perpetrate such twaddle for the deluding of their readers. Also a whale when it is dead does by some mysterious volition point its head, not in the wind's eye, or directly to the quarter from whence the wind comes, but about eight points, or forty-five degrees, therefrom, and, stranger still, does invariably drift *towards* the wind, and not, like a ship, away from it. Various explanations have been proffered to account for this really wonderful movement of the whale's great carcass after death, but none of them, I think,

is feasible save this: that the whale's tail, being a huge limber piece of gristle of exquisite propulsive shape, is so actuated by the wash of the waves past the great body that its motions, like those of an oar turned in a groove at the stern of a boat, are sufficient to keep the body to which it is attached working to windward. Not, be it noted, against a current, which moves the whole mass of water, but against the wind through the water and incidentally against the sea, which is quite a different matter.

Perhaps an apology is necessary for so long a digression, when the fate of Mr. Pease and his brave men is trembling in the balance, but there are so many utterly impossible and unexplainable things to be read in stories now, written to account for the escape of the hero, that I have felt compelled to take up a little more space than usual in which to explain the entire reasonableness and possibility of escape from their dire peril which actuated and hardened Mr. Pease and his crew. A whisper had run from end to end of the boat full of hope, and Rube in the middle had accepted it with heartfelt joy, not for his own sake (for this extraordinary man never thought about himself at all), but for the sake of his shipmates. And then all settled down to wait and watch. High over them, with a most terrific noise, a blaze of unearthly light, and a peculiarly chilling sensation, burst the hurricane. Really, terrible though it was, they were immensely surprised that it was not worse. They did not, could not realise how that great bank of flesh, already floating much higher than ever it did with life in it, was protecting them, not merely from the impact of the sea, but from the swamping effect

of the spindrift, the sea face carried airwards by the wind. As this came flying along it met the body of the whale, and shot upwards, just passing over the frail cockleshell riding in the little smooth to leeward. All heaven's artillery opened out, the roar of the wind, the rumble of the thunder, the hiss of the lightning ; but cowering low down in their tiny craft rocking easily in the quiet water under the lee of the whale, those six men lived. And as the hours wore on they forgot to be afraid ; nay, they even slept, or hazily speculated upon what they should do when, the storm having passed, they might, and probably would, find themselves alone on that wide, wide sea, foodless and waterless. And so the hours succeeded each other, day insensibly passed into night, leathery tongues vainly roamed round parched mouths seeking moisture and finding none, and still hope lived.

How long they had thus patiently borne the burden of a peril of which no landsman can have aught but the feeblest adumbration of an idea, none of them knew, for none of them had a watch, and even had there been one there was no light. The darkness was of that Egyptian character that one experiences in a coal mine, and the blazing rivers of lightning which occasionally coursed over their heads only added to their blindness. But presently, as at some celestial word of command, the elemental tumult ceased, the wind fell to a dead calm, and a strange motion, totally unlike the steady heave and roll of the former hours, took its place. Overhead the cloud-pall thinned and a star or two appeared. Their eyes, grown accustomed to the velvety blackness, saw that they were the centre of a charmed circle, all around which, at

so short a distance that they seemed to be at the bottom of a whirlpool, enormous masses of water rose and fell in disorderly heaps. It was an appalling sight, and the mate, with thoughtful wisdom, distracted their attention from it by advising them to take advantage of the temporary lull to get a drink and eat a biscuit. Each whaleboat carries a wooden vessel like a large bucket, holding about four gallons of fresh water. It is headed up like a cask, but has a wooden spigot attached by a short lanyard, and this, withdrawn, suffers the water to escape in a thin stream into a piggin which is held beneath it. There is also a long narrow keg kept under the little deck over the stern of the boat, also headed up tightly but easy to open by those who know how, in which are a number of biscuits, a lantern, and some candles and matches. This was now produced, and a biscuit each handed round, which, with a drink of water, had a wonderful effect in raising everybody's spirits.

Mr. Pease then said, 'M' lads, I don' s'pose 'at ever in the history of seafarin' a boat's crew has bin known t' hang out a hurrican in the open sea same 's we've done, fur which we've gut t' thank ole Johnny Squarehead here as th' means sent by Almighty God fur our safety. B'lieve me, boys, we're through th' wust of it. We sh'll hev almost as much wind as before, but not fur near as long, an' yew know how safe a harbour the whale gives us. I needn't ask ye t' thank God: I know yew've all done that, 'specially Rube thar. Say, Rube, sonny, haow're ye hittin' it, eh?' 'Glorious, Mr. Pease, glorious. I wuz jest thinkin' as ye spoke, "though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil,

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." 'Bully fer yew, Rube,' said Mr. Pease. 'They wuz a time when I sh'd have miscalled yew 'r anybody else 'at talked like that fur a darned hypocrite ; but, thank God, I know better now. I've a-learnt how good a *man* a Christian kin be.'

He had hardly uttered the last words than with an awful howling sound the wind burst out upon them from the opposite direction, bringing with it such a cloud of spray that for a few minutes they fought gaspingly for breath, and groped blindly to bale the boat. They hardly knew while those few fateful minutes lasted whether they were sinking or not, but their faithful defender, in death returning good for evil, gradually took up his relative position to the wind as before, and although they could not see they could feel that they were again on the sheltered side of the great carcass. And, besides, it seemed to them as if it afforded more protection than it had done before. They could not think the wind had lessened—indeed, they believed it to blow harder than ever—but certainly their boat rode easier ; and with a relief not to be expressed in words they saw that light was coming. Only one thing gave them additional uneasiness : the increasing glare beneath them. The lightning had almost entirely ceased, but, as if to compensate for that cessation of the unearthly fires above, the waters beneath them fairly glowed with green illumination in broad bands, which came and went incessantly. They all knew that this meant the gathering of the ravening deep-sea hosts, attracted thereto by the mighty banquet, and entirely oblivious of the war of the winds above.

How, throughout those hours of terror, had it fared with the crew of the *Xiphias* remaining on board that staunch old ship? Peacefully enough until the passing of the storm-centre. Then indeed they were in evil case. For *they* had no charmed circle, beyond which the waves could not pass, to protect them. It was an omission only too frequently made, and almost unpardonable in these ships. Had they but hung canvas bags of oil from both bows and both quarters, through which the calming liquid might have drained, they would have been spared much of the labour, danger, and anxiety. But nothing of the kind had been arranged for, and consequently when that fearful vortex sea broke upon them, not only did their vessel's decks fill with water in masses weighing hundreds of tons, and smashing everything that was smashable, but the working of the ship opened her seams so much that, in spite of the risk of being exposed in the waist, it was absolutely necessary for all hands to muster at the pumps. There, secured by ropes around their bodies, and occasionally entirely overwhelmed by the towering masses of water breaking on board, they toiled unmurmuringly. Again and again they were hurled like a scattered bundle of chips in all directions; the ropes with which they were secured threatened to cut them in halves, making deep discoloured grooves in their flesh, and floating wreckage beat and bruised them savagely in its dashing to and fro. But they still stuck to their posts unflinchingly, officers and men together putting forth all their powers, and hoping, ever hoping, even when all hope seemed dead.

For the *Xiphias* was, to all outward seeming, a

wreck. Her bulwarks were gone fore and aft ; the massive brick erection of the try-works had been swept so cleanly away that no trace of it remained ; three of the fine boats were gone, and only the ring-bolts with which they had been hoisted still dangled at the davit-heads. Several sails, in spite of the care exercised in their securing, had wriggled adrift, and the tigerish wind had snatched them from the yards as dry leaves are stripped from the trees in autumn. But it is in times like these that the Divine in man shines out, and Captain Hampden stood erect, not counting his burden of years, nor his present load of care for his crew, nor the heartache for the brave fellows long ago, he thought, gone to their well-earned rest in the silence of the sea. His eyes shone bright, his heart beat temperately, his voice rang steady, and when, the short calm gone, the hurricane burst again upon them from its opposite segment, all hands felt his noble influence, and braced themselves to endure to the end.

Forty miles away Mr. Pease and his brave little crew still lived. Once settled into their old position to leeward of the dead whale they felt, such was the effect upon their minds of their recent experience, almost safe from the tempest above and the assault of the sea. They noticed, indeed, that the latter gradually became more furious, as if, enraged beyond measure by its previous restraint, it was now determined to make up for loss of opportunity, and destroy everything in its path alien to its domain. But even that carried some comfort, for while feeling well protected to leeward of the whale they cared little for waves however high : the very fact of those waves

rearing their heads so savagely told them that the force of the hurricane must be waning ; and, besides, the thinning of the cloud-pall above, the absence of the lightning, and an indescribable elevation of spirits, all had their part in the growth of hope. Only, there remained the increasing menace beneath. Occasionally a slight tap, smartly given, under the boat sent a shudder through them as it reminded them how slight was the barrier which intervened between them and the hungry jaws of that host of sharks. Men, however, who had ridden out such a day and night of terror were hardly likely now to become panic-stricken : they had come to regard themselves as under the special protection of God. So, terrible as their position undoubtedly was, it had not the same effect upon them as it would have had if it had come upon them suddenly.

The hurricane passed away, going as usual through its various fining phases as better weather came. By noon the sky was clear, the sea deeply azure, the sun sending down new vigour into that hardly used group of men. A great exaltation of spirit possessed them all, for it is noticeable how, whenever the hurricane, cyclone, or typhoon has passed, everything in nature seems bound to rejoice, not because it has been allowed to live, but because of the cleansing, sweetening, freshening up of the world.

The sharks swarmed in incredible numbers, the birds came in myriads, the dead mass to windward began to emit a charnel-house foetor, but all the men were cheerful, and munched their half-biscuit determinedly, as if to show that they meant to live up to the hopefulness engendered by their atmospheric

environment. Only the mate, in moments when not engaged in cheering up his crew, looked grave. He felt the responsibility for those trustful souls. And he could not help feeling how remote was the possibility of their ship (or, indeed, any ship) picking them up. He knew, too, how short a time would elapse before they would be compelled to abandon their shelter—how few the hours before it would become so foul that not a human being could live near it. But he said nothing of this. Instead, he maintained his part, with that strange mixture of gravity and cheerfulness puckering his brow. He often caught Rube's earnest eyes fixed upon him as if in deep questioning, but he evaded them. 'Time enough,' he thought, 'for the revelation that must surely come.'

The night passed in perfect peace. The burning stars mirrored themselves in the glassy bosom of the deep, the new moon peeped shyly forth, a glittering silver sickle with a clearly seen though dull disc filling up the round. Gently as an infant on its mother's breast the boat rose and fell to the softly undulating swell. All except Mr. Pease seemed asleep, but continually sleepers half-raised themselves with indistinct expressions of disgust as the foulness of the air half awakened them. 'To-morrow,' thought the mate, 'we must cut adrift: flesh and blood can stand this no longer.' So with the dawn (and what a lovely dawn it was!—like the first in its brightness), the lines were cut, and with a few strokes of the oars the boat was propelled beyond that area of stench, the whale having now swollen to the semblance of a ship bottom up or some huge oblong bladder floating high upon the

sea surface. When all hands had eaten the few crumbs of food remaining, and had moistened their aching throats with a little swallow of water, Mr. Pease said, 'Boys, we've been through a lot, but perhaps we've got th' worst ahead. Never mind. We're all men here, we know that, an' whatever happens we'll remain men. We'll die if we must die, or live if we're let live, like men made in the image of God.'

And the six of them solemnly said, 'Amen.'

## CHAPTER XXI

### A STRANGE RESCUE

RELUCTANTLY, but of necessity, we return to the *Grampus* getting under weigh from her snug anchorage among the Cosmoledo reefs, and as smart as cleanliness and a complete equipment can make her, emerging once more upon her proper domain, the sea. Her ruler sat in awful state upon the top of the little house aft, Priscilla by his side in a deck chair made for her by the carpenter. She gazed with listless eyes upon the wonderful panorama spread out before her, not daring to appear interested lest her terrible husband should see in that some excuse for ordering her below again. Full well she knew that it was only because he feared that she would have another serious attack of illness that he allowed her this sweet privilege of breathing the fresh air of heaven ; a privilege she had enjoyed all her stay ashore, and the deprivation of which while on board had certainly led up to her illness. But in pursuance of her resolve to endure unto the uttermost, she would have died rather than ask any consideration at his hands, while taking with calm thankfulness such crumbs as he chose to fling her contemptuously.

The late invalids, still pale from their recent close struggle with death, were doing their best to 'keep

their ends up' with the Portuguese portion of the crew, who—trained fine, hard as nails, and with that elevating sense of superiority which counts for so much in human conflict—were, while working harmoniously side by side with the white men, continually letting the latter see in what estimation they were held. And no sooner was the ship clear of the reefs, and watches set, than the white men were confronted with another degradation. All sailors know that there are certain berths in the worst of forecastles which are considered better than any others for who can explain what sea-reasons. These berths are usually occupied by the best men in the ship obviously, and especially on a whaling voyage. Now, when the watch that was released went below, its members, who were of the now despised race, were confronted with a state of things which had never before occurred to them. They were ordered to shift and give up their bunks to better men. For a few moments it looked as if there would be a great fight. All the fighting blood of the Anglo-Saxon surged up, but the odds were far too heavy: no anger could blind men to that, nor any courage persuade them to hurl themselves headlong upon the knives and pistols borne by the black Dagoes and ostentatiously displayed by them. Therefore the white men accepted the inevitable and shifted, amid the chuckling jeers of their triumphant watchmates, and another step in Captain Da Silva's carefully calculated revenge had been attained.

It may perhaps be thought from the way in which I have insisted upon this sad tyranny of black over white that I have a serious bias against the black

man. That is not true. I love him generally as a man, and because I do I am not blind to his limitations, and I say emphatically that he is not so constituted that it is safe to trust him with the rule over white men. He may retaliate with the opposite proposition, which I do not care to defend for one moment. By all means let Black rule Black, but do not ever let Black rule White, or you will see Hayti reproduced wherever the shameful law is put in operation, and what it means let my friend Hesketh Pritchard tell you. Moreover, these rulers of the *Grampus* were not negroes. I should no more wish to be ruled by negroes than by a laughing bevy of children out of the nursery, ready at any moment to become cruel apes tearing in pieces their toys. But I might be able to keep my masters amused, should such be my sad fate, and so escape disintegration. If, however, my negro masters had been bred in and in with Portuguese or Spaniards, I ought to seek death at once. When to the cold cruelty of the Latin is added the irresponsibility of the negro, the blend should never be allowed to exercise its power over men of Teutonic breed. Wherever it has done so, the records of such rule are not for general reading lest readers go mad with horror.

Aft the conditions were altered also. In every whaleship there is a space (on the port side generally) abaft the main hatch, and of course below deck, where the harpooners and petty officers are berthed. The first, second, and third mates have their berths allotted to them in the main cabin, offshoots from it of a grim and fearful stuffiness, but possessing a peculiar desirability because of their contiguity to

the dwelling-place of the lord of all. Now Captain Da Silva calmly intimated to his officers that he contemplated considerable changes in the housing accommodation aft. He told them that he had ordered the carpenter to knock up three extra berths in the 'half-deck,' as the harpooners' berth is called, and as soon as that was done, why, they (the officers) would have to clear out, as he needed all the space aft for his own accommodation. The insult was gross, palpable. Indeed, it was hardly veiled, especially remembering the expression of face and the tone of voice accompanying it. But Mr. Court and his brother officer did not forget what they owed to themselves. They were under no misapprehension as to why this line of conduct was being pursued by the skipper, and although both of them felt that the time might arrive when further endurance would be impossible, even at the cost of death for rebellion, that time was not yet. So apparently not noticing the triumphant glitter in the skipper's eyes, or the exultant ring in his voice, they acquiesced, serenely to all outward seeming, but with hearts on fire, and by so doing riveted another link in the heavy chains they were wearing. When does it become a sacred duty to rebel? Who shall say? But one thing seems clear: that there does come a time when, for the sake of others, it is imperative that one man (or it may be woman) stand up and face the tyrant. He may, probably will, die, but how can man die better? And no such death is in vain. However, this high strain may seem unsuited to the present sordid recital—only a little ship's company being tyrannised over by one

devil, and enduring doggedly all that he chooses to load them with.

Once clear of the islands the ship's course was made N.E., and under easy sail the *Grampus* bore away across the smiling Indian Ocean. All went well. Apparently it could not do otherwise where Captain Da Silva was. He never seemed to make a mistake. And when he suddenly came on deck one beautiful afternoon and interrupted the busy tide of work that never slacked off night or day by calling all hands to make all possible sail, and altered the ship's course to due east, no one wondered. They obeyed briskly enough to a casual observer, but in the heart of every white man what weariness of life! For two whole days the *Grampus* fled to the east as fast as her braced-up condition would allow, the look-outs never once relaxing their careful watch around. No one discussed the movement—the time for that had gone. Every white man in the foc'sle knew that should he speak one word capable of being construed into something the skipper might be interested in, it would, before many minutes had elapsed, be repeated with such fantastic additions as the carrier of it was capable of making, into the Captain's greedy ear, with results the most unpleasant to the orginal utterer of the remark.

As suddenly as the course had been altered and all sails set so was another change made. Everything was furled but the fore and main lower topsails, the ship was brought to the wind on the starboard tack, and lay lazily wallowing in the gentle swell coming up from the south-east. And then, to the surprise of no one on board (for by this time all hands, including

his own particular friends, if friends they could be called, believed him to be in league with the devil), there appeared as if from the bosom of the deep an enormous multitude of small whales. Like sperm-whales arrested in their growth, and only about twice the size of 'black-fish.' That is to say, each of them would not be more than three to five tons in weight. It was early morning when they were sighted, and immediately the whole ship was the scene of most violent activity. All sorts of alterations were made, notably the passing out of the boats of the big line-tubs, and only leaving the small hundred-fathom ones behind. Extra harpoons, too, were placed in each boat, and before they left the ship all hands were called aft and thus harangued by the skipper: 'Looky here,' said he, 'these ain't sperm-whales, an' I doan' want no foolin' with 'em. Get fast t' one or two, an' then as th' others come roun' lance 'em, an' leave 'em. T' the fust man 'at kills over ten, I'll give fifty dollars in gold. Naow mind, I'm tellin' ye. Don't waste line 'n' irons on these fish: ef y' du thar'll be big trouble with me 'fore the day 's over.' There was no response but a sort of guttural murmur, succeeded by the quick splashes as the boats took the water and sped away under the utmost pressure of the oars to where the sea was all a foam by reason of the gambollings of that great and joyous company of 'kogia.'

Just as the skipper had forecasted, no sooner had a boat got fast to one of these quaint, short-headed creatures than she became the centre of a curious crowd of his unfortunate fellows, apparently bent upon sharing his fate, and for that purpose thrusting one another aside in their efforts to get as near as

possible to the boat. Every man was armed with a lance, and directed to use it with all his might upon the whale nearest him. What an awful scene of slaying ensued, to be sure ! The sea became literally encumbered with dead. The men who had felt that life was not worth living took new hold upon life in their fierce desire of killing, and forgot for the time all their woes. It seemed as if this great slaughter must be prolonged indefinitely, but suddenly, like a trumpet blast, the voice of the skipper rang out : ' 'Vast killin' ! All but th' mate and second mate's boats, pull for th' ship 's quick 's th' devil 'll let ye. Hurry, naow.' And they did hurry. The ship, having been kept close at hand, required no great amount of manipulation to bring her into the midst of the stricken field, and presently the amazing sight was to be seen of the great carcasses one after another, as she (the ship) came alongside them, rising into the air, a chain sling having been whipped round their tails and a tackle hooked to it by means of which the whole body was hoisted on deck. By five in the afternoon thirty of those huge masses encumbered the deck of the *Grampus*, and she presented an even more gruesome sight than she did when her decks were full of the spoils of the last great catch of sperm-whales..

Now the skipper was in his element. No anxiety about the overside business, everything on deck and snug, although the ship did tumble about most dangerously from the great top weight. All hands were armed with spades, and driven like slaves to use them. But N.B. : no two white men were allowed to work together, lest they might, in desperation, consider the time opportune for making a dash for

freedom. No ; Captain Da Silva saw to that. He had such a head for detail ! All that night and all the next day, without a minute for rest, except just sufficient to swallow the indispensable food, the fuel to keep these human engines performing their allotted motions, the men laboured in silence for the most part, save when the stern commands of the skipper broke the stillness. Doggedly, desperately all hands toiled on, every plunge of a great carcass denuded of spoil over the starboard covering-board punctuating, as it were, the progress being made. And if the decks had been foul before when the last great catch of sperm-whales was made, it was trebly so now. Then, there was little besides the all-prevailing grease, except an occasional block of flesh still left adhering to the blubber : now, all the nameless foulnesses inseparable from cutting up such huge bodies in tropical heat on deck were present in full volume, and—— But this is not a subject to be pursued.

Wonderful to relate, the health of the recent invalids held out against this tremendous strain upon it, and as soon as the last carcass plunged overboard blubber watches were set, and it looked as though relief had come. But not yet. Some attempt must be made to remove a portion at least of the accumulated filth from the deck, and so for nearly half of their first watch below the almost fainting men toiled with water-buckets and brooms to that end. And as they did so they noticed, in half-dazed, unappreciative fashion, how frequently the skipper mounted his little deck aft and gazed earnestly at the lee quadrant of the horizon. This happened so often that at last long dormant curiosity was aroused also, and they

looked earnestly in that direction too. 'Thank God,' all thought, 'it isn't whales he's looking at.' No, it was not : it was an awful-looking Himalaya of blackest cloud, violet edged, that reared its mighty head persistently in that quarter, but did not seem to rise any higher than half-way to the zenith. No one on board knew with what consummate skill and attention, in spite of the many matters claiming his oversight, this wonderful man was manoeuvring his ship out of the path of what he knew to be a devastating cyclone. He needed no sympathy, no help in his calculations ; in fact, he took a secret but colossal pride in standing alone. And reckoning to a nicety, but with a dangerously narrow margin, he kept his crew going to clear away their last great catch, at the same time making all preparations to meet what he knew would soon be there—the frightful swell raised by the hurricane and extending for thousands of miles on either side of its track.

When it came all was ready for it. Double lashings on everything, the tiers of casks below all carefully chocked and tom'd off to beams above, preventer backstays on masts, &c. And as the great green hills of water reaching from horizon to horizon came sweeping onward, tossing the noble ship from summit to valley and back again as if she were just a ball in the hands of gleeful children, the crew cast wistful glances at their saturnine tyrant, wondering, 'How did he know this was coming? What kinder man *is* he, anyhow?' Well, had the answer been forthcoming it would have been just this: That Captain Da Silva was one of those men of native genius who first of all absorb knowledge as a sponge

does water, whose capacity for courage is as great as their capacity for mercy or consideration is small, whose frames are more like automata constructed of steel wire and rubber than sinews and flesh, and who, given the opportunity, could juggle the globe in their hands as a conjurer does his properties, and would do so, but for the wisdom of God, who has ordained that such men shall never go too far. If this sounds like fantastic eulogy as applied to the obscure master of a whaleship, I do not feel at all inclined to argue the point: it is for each one to study out for him or herself and see whether the theory be reasonable or no.

The decks were quite clear, three-fourths of the blubber had been boiled out and the resultant oil run below, when a very strange thing happened. The weather was beautifully fine, the air serene, and a little breeze wafted the *Grampus* at a gentle rate over the sunlit sea. Captain Da Silva, fully contented with himself, was lolling in his wife's chair abaft the wheel smoking a peculiarly rank, oily, and foul-smelling cigar, one of a large quantity which, just suiting his taste, he had bought at Brava. I think it may safely be said that he was just then in the full enjoyment of *dolce far niente*, that peculiarly delightful frame of mind and body conjoined of which 'sweet doing nothing' seems so poor a description—when into the midst of it came Priscilla. Lest it should be thought that I have neglected her of late, I feel bound to say that she had been leading a sort of comatose existence, in this busy little cosmos but not of it, alive but hardly conscious of her surroundings. What could I have said of her but that she awoke, ate a little, lived alone

through the day, and slept again? If perfect life be, as Herbert Spencer says, perfect correspondence with a perfect environment, then was Priscilla only just dwelling on the fringes of life, and might truly be said to be nine-tenths dead. Her placid demeanour and speechless endurance of all things as they came had become so regular an experience with her husband that it was with something very like alarm that he saw her standing before him on deck and heard her sweet, low voice saying distinctly, 'May I speak to you, Ramon?' With a gasp of surprise he rose to his feet and, stepping to the wheel, said to the shrinking helmsman: 'Git t' 'ell forrad outa this,' and the man was gone. Then, turning his lowering eye upon Priscilla, yet not without a certain noticeable twitching of his facial muscles, he muttered, 'Wall, what is it naow? Spit it eout.' She answered timidly, but as if she must speak: 'Ramon, please forgive me, but I know there's a boat with some dying men in it over there.' And she pointed to the north. 'It's a whale-boat, and there's six men, all alive, but going fast. Will you try and save them?' He burst into a very storm of curses upon her for daring to interfere with the working of his ship and for her unmentionable folly in supposing that he, of all men in the world, would be likely to take any notice of such a baby-tale as that. But even as he raved and hissed his foul language at his wife, she could see that in his fierce eyes there was a latent look of awe—that he was only trying by noise and bluster to persuade himself that he was asserting his power in the surest way. Priscilla appeared to be entirely deaf to his awful words. And when,

breathless, he paused, she resumed quietly, 'You will find the boat before evening if you alter the course now, but I am afraid some of the men are already dying.' And with that she turned and went away, leaving her husband like a man just about to have an epileptic fit. However, he managed to restrain himself, and presently his voice was heard roaring for the man whom he had sent from the wheel. Having given up the wheel, he took a few short, undecided turns about the quarter-deck, and then, like one acting upon some entirely irresistible impulse, he growled to the helmsman, 'Keep her away!' 'Keep her away, sir,' replied the man, immediately putting the helm up. As she swung off the wind the skipper shouted, 'Square the mainyard!' and as the watch flew to the braces and trimmed sail he steadied the course at north, which brought the wind a little on the starboard quarter and made the speed about four knots.

This being done he went below as if, disgusted beyond measure at having to do such a thing, he must needs use more opprobrious language to his wife for thus in some mysterious way imposing her will upon his. But when he saw her sitting in their little cabin looking with preternaturally bright eyes into vacancy as if she were seeing something with other than mortal vision, he could say nothing to her at all, but with a muttered curse upon himself for this unheard-of folly he fled on deck, not daring to look behind him. As if he must do something, he slung his binoculars about his neck and mounted to the fore crow's-nest, from which the occupant had to depart suddenly upon the skipper's appearance. He

searched the horizon with most jealous care, but nothing could be seen, nothing but sea and sky and an occasional bird. So after half an hour up there he descended again and solaced his excited feelings by harrying the men, who, as usual, were kept at work upon perfectly needless jobs as if their very lives depended upon getting the work done in record time. And so congenial did he find this occupation that he had almost forgotten why, contrary to his own plans, he was running his ship almost dead before the wind up the middle of the Indian Ocean instead of getting away across to the Straits of Sunda as he had intended, when 'What's that?' shouted the mate. 'Somethin' right ahead, sir; looks like dead whale 'r a boat 'r a big log.' Ah! Trembling in every limb, Captain Da Silva snatched his glasses and sprang aloft. Panting with his speed he reached the crow's-nest. He did not need to ask where the object was. It stood up with remarkable distinctness against that wide, clear blue, a little ungainly black patch. He focussed his glasses upon it and stared through the double tubes so earnestly that his eyeballs burnt in their sockets. A cold shudder, in that tropical day, possessed him, ran through him, and made the hair of his flesh stand up. It was a boat and nothing else. What manner of woman could his wife be, and was it safe for him to treat her as he had been doing? Superstitious fears seized upon him, for ever it will be found that gross cruelty and superstition go hand in hand, and at that moment he registered a mental vow that in future there should be a great change in his treatment of Priscilla. Indeed, he blamed himself bitterly for

having allowed himself to behave to her as he had done. But he took refuge in the mental coward's lying plea by muttering, 'How was I to know?'

Go down from aloft he dared not. Slow, exasperatingly slow, as his ship's progress was, he felt that he must remain at his lofty perch until the last moment, when he would go himself and see what this strange business meant. It was a weary business, for under such circumstances a ship's progress seems to be so deliberate, one's impatience is so futile and yet so impossible to avoid showing, that it tries men more than any words can say. It was nearly sunset when at last the waif was near enough for a boat to be lowered for the purpose of bringing her alongside. Long before that time arrived Captain Da Silva had devoured every detail of her—had seen that to all appearance the six men in her were dead, that she was a whaleboat, but, of course, could not read her name, since it was not the practice for whaleboats to carry the name of their ship painted on them, as is done in the merchant service. The same haughty disregard of any other person's curiosity is usually shown in the Navy, where scarcely any of the smaller boats give the ship's name—you can read it on the men's caps if you want to know it.

Leaping into the boat he had ordered to be lowered, the skipper gave the order to 'give way' in such a tone that the men fairly lifted the boat through the water. None of them dared to steal a glance at him ; if they had they would have marvelled. He was in a piteous state of nervous excitement. He felt as if his wife's eyes were penetrating through

the massive sides of the ship, that she was cognisant of his very thoughts ; and the idea made great beads of cold sweat stand out upon his swarthy skin. He fought with his fears as a man fights with death, now devising strange punishments for Priscilla for having thus obtained a strange power of frightening him, and now vowing to himself that he would devote the rest of his time with her to making amends for his previous treatment of her. Not that he was conscious of having done anything he should not do—men of that class seldom are—but because she did not seem to be happy under the discipline which he felt was his prerogative to mete out to all under his command. And then they reached the boat.

Are those bundles of rags and bones men ? By night the dews and by day the pitiless sun have alternately soaked and scorched them. They have endured such agonies as men do not care to think of. The boat herself is so bleached with sun and dew and wind that it seems wonderful she still holds together. And there is a faint smell as of death. Round to windward, quick. Look closely. Is there any life at all ? Yes, there is a slight movement. A bight of tow-line is flung on board and secured to the bow thwart, a curt order is given, and the waif is being towed to the ship. Arriving alongside, she is hoisted level with the rail so that the hapless ones may be lifted out, as they are, so gently, so tenderly, by those rude, much-persecuted men, while the skipper looks on loweringly. One is dead. He is a little Italian apparently so reduced by his sufferings that he looks more like an Egyptian mummy uncased than anything else. But in all the rest there is some spark

of life, notably in one big-framed—alas, every bone is awfully visible, and his eyes are away in the back of his head somewhere at the bottom of two long tunnels—fair-haired man, whose broken lips part and whose blackened tongue tries pitifully to frame a word.

The skipper goes away and leaves willing, eager hands to attend mercifully upon these castaways. He has said no word forbidding anything to be done, and so the group around the bodies give such aid as they know how, while the rest of the crew trim yards again for Anjer. And by the time she is settled upon her old course and the Captain has carelessly strolled forward again, he is humbly informed that five of the men he has rescued are not only still alive, but likely to go on living.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE MEETING

NOW, owing to the way in which Priscilla kept her cabin when not absolutely driven on deck by the foulness of the air below, she was, strange as it must appear, quite ignorant of what was going on above her. Had the steward not been exceedingly busy upon some domestic task, he would, poor little man, have gladly carried her the news. But so it was, the boat's crew had been rescued, the boat hoisted in-board, and things had all resumed their normal course without her being any the wiser. And yet somehow she felt a lightening of the heart. She felt sure, in spite of the coarse and brutal way in which her husband had received her vision, that he had done, or would do, what she had asked him—she had no anxiety upon that head at all. But then she was never anxious now. She had cultivated unintentionally the serene detachment of mind of those Indian devotees who, by dint of long meditation and abstinence from all but the barest necessities in the way of food and sleep, have attained unto a condition of mind that is favourable to the detachment of body from soul without the catastrophe of death. Of its psychology I know nothing, but I do feel that, given sufficient will power, the human brain may be capable

of some wonderful power of sending thought waves out into the unseen. It does not matter, anyhow, since I only wish to record the trance condition in which Priscilla seemed now to spend most of her time.

But in some mysterious way she was subconsciously easier in her mind, and that although she knew absolutely nothing about what was going on. Also her husband seemed, for some reason or another, to be anxious that she should not know. Perhaps he was ashamed, or whatever kindred feeling to shame he might be capable of, to let her know that he had, after all, obeyed her words and found that she had been absolutely correct. Truth to tell, he was immensely impressed, and something very like fear of his wife was slowly getting the mastery over him. Thus days went by as the *Grampus* drew steadily towards the great East Indian Archipelago, and the rescued ones grew steadily well by dint of careful letting alone and the help of their previous clean lives. Then there came a day when Captain Da Silva took it upon him to have the apparent head man of the boat's crew he had saved brought aft to him, and the following colloquy ensued. (It must be borne in mind that the rescued men's voices had only just returned to them.)

The Captain : 'Wall, wut ship d' ye b'long to ?'  
The Officer : 'Xiphias, sir, of New Bedford.' A grunt from the skipper and a short interval of silence. Then the skipper spoke again, after carefully rolling his cigar between his lips, as if to extract the last grain of nicotine out of it. "'N' wut wuz ye doin' t' git lost ? Sounds funny, grown men like you air

gittin' lost.' The scorn and contempt and utter brutality of his manner passed all description. 'Wall, sir,' replied the mate faintly, 'the circumstances wuz peculiar. We left the ship in chase of a whale just before a hurricane kem on, an' I hung on t' the whale mebbe a bit too long, so 't we got outer sight o' the ship. 'N' then we'd all we knew t' keep in shelter ov th' carcass till that awful weather wuz over. 'N' by that time th' whale wuz so blown up we couldn't stand his stink any longer, an' we cut away from him an' put fur th' Seychelles as near as I could judge. But there wuz only th' lantern keg of bread an' th' ushal water, an' that's all we've a-had fur twelve days. If th' boys hadn't been th' very best we sh'd all a-ben mad long ago.' Another spell of silence, broken at last by the skipper saying: 'S'pose you don' reckon on ever seeing yewr ship agen, hey? Le's see, old man Hampden got her, er had her, I think. Ef so, they ain't 'nough of her left by this time t' repair a whaleboat with. He was a soft-hearted old greenie, anyhow, kinder pious, I seem to remember, 'n' didn't know his nose fr'm the jibboom end.' 'Excuse me, sir,' said the mate suddenly, with some energy, 'thet kain't be eour Capt'n Hampden. I ben fishin' fur two-an'-twenty year, and he wuz the smartest skipper at anything a skipper ought to do 'at ever I gammed.' 'Oh, shet yer big mouth, yew wouldn't know a smart man w'en yew see him. It's the same man right enough. I knew him very well, an' wouldn't ha' carried him fur ballast in my ship. But I ain't got no time t' be yarnin' with yew, ner inclination either if yer come to that. I'm jest figgerin' eout wut t' dew with ye. I want a few han's, an' although yew ain't

th' kind I'd have if I c'd choose, y'r better than none, I s'pose, an' so I'll ship th' five of yew 'n' give ye th' 250th lay, same 's th' rest of th' men 'r gettin'.' 'But, Captain,' replied the now thoroughly alarmed man, 'I wuz mate of the *Xiphias*—I ben mate fur th' las' ten years, 'n' yew kain't mean t' take such a slice of my life as to ship me here fur a three years' cruise on a seaman's lay. In th' name ov common humanity, sir, yew kain't mean it.' And the big drops of sweat started out of the poor fellow's face. 'Kain't I!' sneered the skipper. 'Jest yew say yew don' know, and yew'll be more 'n half right. I k'n an' dew mean just that thing. Yew'll take my offer, yew an' the rest ov th' great babies 'at come with ye, 'r if ye don't yew'll wish yew'd been left to rot in thet boat. 'N' mine yew, not a word outa yewr heads, 'r ye'll fine me t' deal with, 'n I'll try an' teach ye wut a smart cap'n is.'

Poor Mr. Pease! No braver man ever stepped, but he was weak and trembling from exhaustion. A strong desire to live had returned to him, and, moreover, he was overborne by the fierceness of the terrible man with whom he was confronted, and he dimly remembered some of the terrible stories current about him—of the dark deeds done by him in the secret places of the sea, and up till now with impunity, because of his phenomenal success as a whale-fisher. When will people in business learn that it is a crime against man and God to condone, yes, connive at abominable wickedness in those they have set over their employees, because, forsooth, they are 'smart men'? When will people learn to brand a man as a demon, whatever his place in society or the Church

or in business, who, in his villainous methods of getting rich, brings woe and death unto thousands of homes? When will ministers of the Gospel dare to say to such men bringing their vilely acquired wealth and pouring it into the coffers of the Church, 'Thy money perish with thee!'

So with this terror upon him, Mr. Pease signed the articles, and his crew followed suit, becoming by that act the slaves of the skipper for the next three years unless some heaven-sent happening should release them. And immediately, though they were yet so exhausted, they were set to such work as they could do—making sinnet, scraping, and mat-weaving. Well was it for them that no whales were sighted, or assuredly they would have been called upon to take their places in the various boats, under which severe treatment they would probably have died.

It may perhaps be thought strange that as yet no allusion has been made to the strange fact of Reuben and Priscilla being on board the same ship at last. But really, as far as these two principal actors in our story are concerned, it did not seem possible that anything should come of it, the circumstances being so peculiar. As repeatedly observed, Priscilla came on deck but little, for she could not bear the jealous watchfulness with which her husband followed her every movement. And in the fo'c'sle, or, indeed, out of it, such was the terror under which all hands lived, not merely of the skipper, but of his Portuguese allies, that any conversation concerning the skipper was tacitly banned. No word ever passed between the white men about him or his affairs. The Portuguese may have discussed him freely, but

as it was in their own tongue, no one but themselves was any the wiser. Thus it came to pass that Reuben was on board the ship a month before he so much as knew that the Captain had his wife with him, which is all the more noteworthy from the fact that in small vessels like the *Grampus* it is the rule that the Captain cannot sneeze in the solitude of his stateroom without it being known and commented upon all over the ship in an hour. Poor fellows, they have so little to talk about. But whalers generally needed to be exempt from this law. Their discipline was much too strict for it to run even in the best of them, while in the *Grampus*, as we have seen, it was in the highest degree dangerous to mention the Captain's name at all.

The ship had passed through the Straits of Sunda into the Java Sea, and was one night, under the skilful pilotage of the skipper, working her darkling way westward along the south coast of Borneo. There was but little wind, except occasionally when a passing squall gave a heavier puff than usual, causing the staunch and well-balanced ship to heel like a yacht. Terrific peals of thunder and blazing flashes of lightning followed one another in quick succession, for the heat of the day was being healthfully dispersed over the sea from the land, although in a somewhat terrifying manner. Rube was at the wheel, his great figure erect and head slightly turned aside to listen for the skipper's slightest word, while keeping one eye fixed upon the faithful little face of the compass suspended inside the skylight. Suddenly there was an awful crash of thunder as if a Himalayan Range were tumbling to pieces, a short breathless hush, and with

a hiss as of escaping steam, sky and sea were flooded with violet flame. As Rube raised his arm instinctively to shield his face he saw by that brief blaze a woman facing him within a few feet. For that vivid instant the two faces were revealed, then utter blackness succeeded. Through Priscilla rushed a spasm of fear. Who was this huge boarded stranger, and whence had he come? More, why did the sight of him put her poor deadened mind into such a ferment as the optic nerves experience when after long darkness the eyes are suddenly exposed to the glare of day? As she groped her way below these things flitted across her brain, but never for one moment did she imagine why or how, and soon, very soon, she resumed her listless introspective attitude again. She had only crept up with some message to her husband of trivial import, and soon the whole incident receded to the background of her mind.

As for Reuben, for one moment he thought he had been struck by lightning, and with the stroke had come a vision of an angel, a sorrowful angel outlined in living light. But the shock, great though it was, did not suffice to unlock that closed door of memory, only to let a few broken gleams of illumination through, tantalising, almost maddening in their incompleteness. He soon recovered, and when relieved from the wheel at eight bells, sought one of the American portion of the old crew and whispered, 'Is they a woman aboard this ship?' 'Hush, for Heaven's sake. If the skipper gits to know you've asked such a question, or I've answered it, he'll trice us up an' flog us, sure 's death. An' ye kain't breathe here without somebody listening. Yes.' 'Thanks,'

replied Rube ; and straightway going to his bunk he lifted up his heart in fervent though silent prayer for the owner of that sweet pale face. In doing this he but obeyed an irresistible impulse, since he knew not at all of Priscilla's suffering, and, indeed, even before the accident which shut him off from the past, had always thought of her as being full of happiness with her husband. Now, however, knowing no more of who Priscilla was than of a person he had never seen or heard of, he was full of a mysterious compassion for her, and felt that he would gladly have laid down his life to serve her.

The crew of the *Grampus* never ate any idle bread, but now they were indeed having a time of travail. For Captain Da Silva was making a passage to the Japan grounds, being mightily wroth because of the ill-success which had attended him lately. The wonderful good fortune enjoyed by him previously had been relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. He felt no joy in it now, looked upon it as only a bare reward for his phenomenal ability and smartness, of which no man was more fully conscious than himself. So he harassed his crew by night and by day, making, trimming, furling, sail ; so that no breath of wind should be wasted, and when, as occasionally happened, a dead calm befell, getting all the boats out and setting their crews to tow the vessel along with their oars. It was a fearful ordeal in that climate, and some of the crew were only kept at it by sheer dread of the skipper. They feared him more than sunstroke or death by sheer exhaustion. It was this state of things which brought about a collision between him and Reuben. The

latter stalwart recruit being always so willing and apparently eager to work, had hitherto escaped even the usual opprobrious epithets with which most of the crew, except the Portuguese, were favoured. But because no occasion of fault could be found in him he was jealously watched by the skipper's cronies, and, as it was bound to do sooner or later, the longed-for opportunity came. The boats had just returned to the ship, after a four hours' tow in the afternoon sun, because a little breeze had sprung up and relieved them. The boat in which Reuben pulled midship oar had just come alongside, and Mr. Pease, who had been pulling tub-oar (next to Rube) had fainted, overcome by heat and exhaustion. Unfortunately, just then the skipper looked over the side, and taking in the position of things with one glance of his flashing eyes, shouted with an awful Portuguese oath, 'Start that lazy Yankee brute there, Pedro! Hit him, hit him with anything!' Pedro, not at all unwillingly, seized a bight of the towline, and was just about to deal the unconscious man a tremendous blow, when Rube, calmly turning round, seized the descending arm, and with his other hand quietly wrenched the rope from the harpooner's fingers. The maddened Portuguese snatched his knife from his belt at the moment of his release, and with his skipper's yell of 'Kill him, kill him!' piercing his ears, made one frantic stab at Rube. But as calmly as he had caught the rope-wielding wrist, so now he caught the murderous one, and with a quick twist made Pedro drop his knife into the sea. A yell of pain escaped the Portuguese as his wrist cracked, and Rube, releasing him, said quietly, 'Sorry t' hurt

ye, shipmate, but ye mustn't kill, y' know.' By this time the skipper had recovered from the speechlessness of rage into which he had been thrown by Rube's action, and shouted, 'On deck with ye, on deck!' All obeyed but the man who had fainted: he was beyond obedience. As Rube stepped over the rail the skipper met him with a blow of a heavy bludgeon of oak that might have felled an ox. Right across the head and face it came, and the splendid fellow dropped senseless and bleeding at his master's feet. Stooping, the latter dragged the unconscious body to the middle of the deck, and sang out, 'Up waist boat.' But the white men stood irresolute for one moment as if inclined to resent the vileness of this last assault. That moment was fatal. For without a sign made every Portuguese in the ship had ranged himself by the skipper, and in their hands gleamed revolver barrels. Howling out the order again, the unled whites seized the falls and ran the boat up on to her cranes. One of the Portuguese asked if the man was to be lifted out of the boat, but the skipper turned upon him with an oath so fierce that he shrank back, regretting that he had spoken.

No one dared suggest aid to Rube, and so, with the knowledge that again he had fully asserted his superiority over the white man, Captain Da Silva went quite happy to his supper. And sitting there with his wife, he could not forbear saying exultantly: 'Nice crowd o' hogs these countrymen o' yours are. I d'no' wut I wuz fool 'nough t' take any of 'em aboard here for at all. Some of 'em kem aboard through yew, anyhow—one 'specially I remember just now. I'm goin' t' give myself th' pleasure of floggin' him

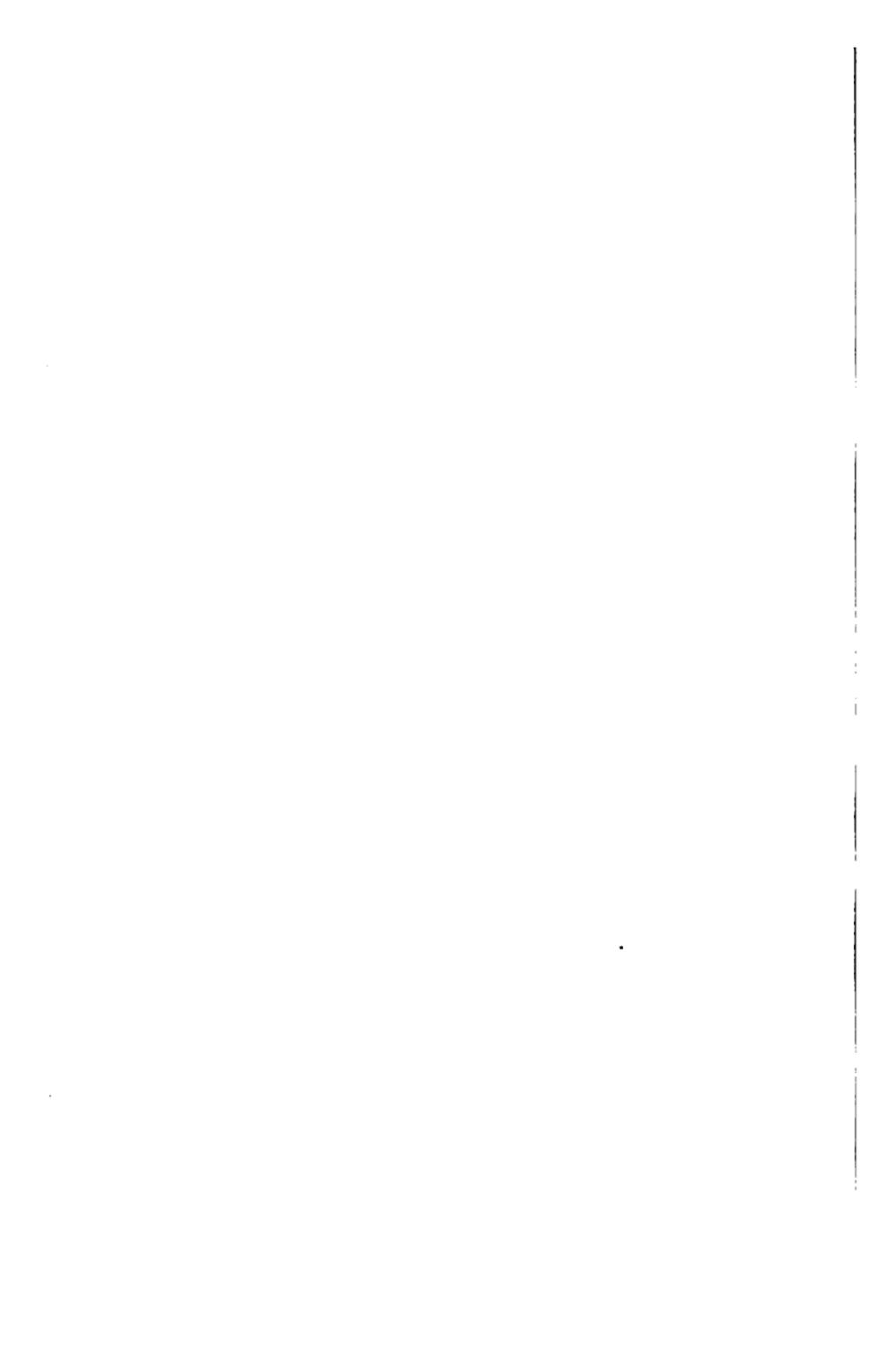
to-morrow, if he ain't dead, and yew shall be a witness to see it's all done legally, y' know.' And he winked hideously at her. She, poor thing, sat as usual silent and white, hardly realising the horror of the whole thing. And her misery of mind and body was only slightly increased when, as a sort of praise-meeting to whatever devil they felt protected by, the skipper invited the Portuguese harpooners below to a drinking bout, first locking Priscilla into her room. The baffled Pedro was there with his arm in a sling, looking a veritable fiend. 'Never mind,' said the skipper in Portuguese, 'yew shall have the flogging of that big Yankee beast if he lives. What do you think of that?' Pedro muttered some inarticulate profanity and took another drink. He did not mind much what was done as long as he 'got even,' as he termed it. And now it is time to draw a veil over that bestial scene, worthy of the worst days of the pirates, and especially those Portuguese pirates who sailed the China Seas commanding gangs composed of all the scum of the Far East and outdoing them all in cruelty.

On deck a stealthy figure had crept forward to where Rube lay, with a mat to put under his head and a little water to moisten his parched lips. It was the poor darky steward, who had been shut out of the cabin while the drinking was going on, and who thus, for pity's sake, risked undergoing the same treatment. Not that it would have been much novelty, for there was scarcely an inch of the poor wretch's body which had not its scar. And at last men get used to such treatment (some men, that is) and take it as a matter of course. It is pleasant to record that this poor samaritan was enabled to carry out his beneficent

little ministration unseen, save by Mr. Court, who still kept his watch, although in a dogged sullen way that was intensely painful to see, but which, strange to say, did not seem to detract from his efficiency. But, as he said to himself very often in the solitudes wherein his soul roamed during the night watches, was there ever an officer so treated? He did not know, from his favourable position heretofore in American ships, that many hundred British mercantile officers have had to endure treatment even worse than his, because they have been, as well as kept at arm's length by the skipper and made to feel that they were of less account than anybody on board, openly and constantly reviled before all the crew, and then expected to maintain discipline. Happily, with the morning came, instead of the shameful exhibition purposed by the skipper, a diversion welcomed by all hands, except Rube, who, but for his stertorous breathing, appeared to be dead. It was the raising of a 'pod' of cow whales at daylight, with a brisk breeze and everything in favour of a splendid day's hunting. Rube was dragged aft out of the way. Pedro, whose wrist was so badly strained that he could not lift a harpoon with it, grumblingly took up his station aloft for signalling purposes, and in ten minutes from the time of sighting the whales five boats were away, the skipper leading as usual. This, however, was to be an exception to the usual celerity of capture shown by the *Grampus*'s crew. In the first place, the whales were going so fast that it seemed for a long while as if the chase must be fruitless; and then, when at last the boats did rush in among them, their movements were so marvelously agile that the danger was very great. The



THE LOOSE WHALE ROSE SPECTRALLY BETWEEN, ON HER BACK, WITH HER JAWS AGAPE.



skipper as usual seemed ubiquitous, compelling the admiration of all by the way he manipulated his boat. He had already killed his whale when he saw that Mr. Court was exceedingly hampered by the movements of a loose cow, which behaved as if she understood exactly how best to frustrate all the deadly intentions of the enemy of her companion. Without a moment's hesitation the skipper cut loose from his whale, shouted to his men, and tore off to help the mate, leaping like a flying fish from one boat to the other as they flew swiftly in opposite directions. Snatching the lance from the hand of the amazed officer, he had just dealt a tremendous blow at the fast whale with it, when, as the boat lay off, the loose whale rose spectrally between, on her back, with her jaws agape. Swiftly turning, those great jaws closed, catching the skipper's arm, with which he was poising his newly straightened lance again, and dragging him headlong out of the boat. Paralysed with horror, the mate stood for a moment, then stooped and caught the skipper as he came bounding to the surface almost at the spot where he went overboard. But in doing so Mr. Court overbalanced himself, and he and the skipper, interlocked in each other's arms, went down again. The harpooner, a wonderfully smart black Portuguese, immediately cut the line, allowing the whale to run, and after a minute or two's manœuvring, succeeded in bringing the mate and skipper to the surface and into the boat, the latter almost dead.

The best haste possible was made to the ship, and the skipper was carefully lifted on board, laid on the deck aft, and his clothes cut off as the only way of uncovering his wounded arm and side. All the

time the examination took place he was unconscious, so the mate was able to dress the extensive lacerations, set two broken ribs and the mangled arm, and make him fairly comfortable before he came to. Then with very great care he was lowered through the cabin skylight and laid upon the settee in his berth. Here he was left to the care of his wife, while the mate returned to his arduous duties on deck. It is pleasant to record that his first care was to see some adequate attention given to the case of Rube, who was moaning and tossing ceaselessly in the throes of brain fever.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FAREWELL TO THE *XIPHIAS*

WE left the *Xiphias* in evil case as far as appearance went, but with her brave crew still undaunted by the long series of misfortunes which had now, as they thought, almost reached the culminating point in the loss of their vessel and all of their lives. Perhaps a bitter pang did stab some of their hearts as they realised that if the hurricane now raging should succeed in its efforts to destroy them all, their fate would never be known. That adds a new terror to death, for man loves to think that his going hence is no mystery, and that its incidents will be remembered to his credit by someone, if only for a little time. But gradually hope grew stronger (they had never quite lost it) that they might be saved, for the weather was, as always in the following segment of a cyclone, growing perceptibly better, although the force of the wind showed as yet no sign of lessening. Unfortunately, herein lay their present danger ; for the *Xiphias* was leaking so badly, she had evidently been strained to such an extent, that the sea, now rising and tossing her about like a ball, bade fair to complete her destruction after all. Therefore, encouraged by the skipper and Mr. Peck, who had now of course assumed the position of chief officer, they

all toiled unremittingly at the pumps, even though the face of the carpenter as he sounded the well every hour never lightened.

The struggle for life had been so fierce that when at last the awful meteor had passed quite away, the sea had resumed its placid calm, and all nature seemed through that tremendous convulsion to have renewed its vigorous youth, the poor tired old ship was hardly able to rise to the long, long swell that still came rolling majestically towards her, extending from one horizon to the other. She just slowly swallowed like a top that is 'going to sleep' and will presently lie dead. So alarming was the outlook that Captain Hampden and a few of the more weary of the men commenced to provision the boats in readiness to leave the ship in case she foundered. One thing puzzled the fine old skipper, though, and that was how, with nearly twelve feet of water in her, the *Xiphias* floated at all. And then suddenly, calling himself a fool, he remembered all that oil below tightly bunged in stout casks, which in their turn were well stowed and secured from floating adrift by 'toms' from the beams above them. Due to his own forethought, and yet he had forgotten—could not realise why his ship had not, long ere this, 'turned turtle' and sunk.

Having realised it, he called all hands aft and explained the circumstances to them; told them that they were only about three hundred miles south of Mahé, in the Seychelles, which was the nearest port where they could hope to find their needs supplied and whence they could send news home that would arrive there within reasonable time. Finally, he

concluded his speech by saying: 'Men, God hasn't forgotten us. We shall live, I feel sure. And I don't believe He's forgotten our poor shipmates either. I feel almost certain that they are still alive, and that in His own good time we shall see them again. Carpenter, sound that well again.' The order was obeyed amidst breathless attention, and the cheer that went up when Chips announced, 'Eleven-three, sir, just what it was an hour ago,' could not have been improved upon by the healthiest and most vigorous crew. Now every man went on with his work soberly and in good heart, as if persuaded of his perfect security, and the ship crawled daily nearer port, while, although regular pumping continued, there was none of the energy of despair in the work because it certainly was not needed. But at the mastheads every eye while daylight lasted roamed around the great blank circle unceasingly as untiringly, hoping against hope to see, not whales, but some sign of the lost ones. In the foc'sle the fellows could talk of nothing else but Rube; and MacManus, who had been one of those left on board, refused to be comforted. In fact, with the emphasis of his warm-hearted, illogical race, he went so far as to say that if Rube was lost he wouldn't survive him, and that if even his own father confessor dared to suggest to him that Rube was a heretic instead of a blessed saint and martyr he would peril all his chances of eternal salvation by committing a fierce, premeditated assault upon the unworthy man.

All the patience possessed by this crew of good fellows was needed by them now. For while their hope was strong again, it was sickeningly deferred

day after day by the lightness of the airs and the sluggishness of the vessel. Besides, as often happens in such cases, the leak, having unaccountably ceased to gain upon them, now began to increase again, although very slowly. There is something appalling in being on board ship under such conditions. Knowing the possibilities, one cannot help expecting that presently the opening through which the hungry water is forcing itself may widen out so extensively as to make the sinking of the ship a matter of minutes. This feeling of dreadful anticipation is, I am bound to say, not nearly so much warranted on board a wooden ship as it is in an iron or steel vessel, where the springing of a leak may mean the starting of one rivet in a row, which, resenting the extra strain put upon them, promptly give up their hold, and the great plate, gaping, admits the sea so fast that the hull sinks like a bottle with the bottom knocked out.

However, all hands stuck manfully by their task, and on the twelfth day from the ceasing of the hurricane they were rewarded by hearing from the mast-head the joyful shout of 'Land-ho!' It was early morning, but so slow was the pace at which their vessel crawled towards this haven of refuge that it was nightfall before they anchored in the beautiful little bay of Mahé. And as the anchor rattled joyfully down, its clangour reverberating among the hills, all hands felt deeply grateful, and then very sad, as they thought of the brave fellows who had not been permitted to reach port with them. Then the sails were quickly furled and the decks cleared up, and a spell at the pumps was decided upon by the skipper before

allowing everybody to have a long night's rest. So after a good meal and smoke, the pumps were manned by three gangs, who relieved one another at ten minutes' intervals until nine o'clock, by which time the water in the hold had been so much reduced that, after consultation with the carpenter, the skipper decided that except for an anchor watch of one seaman and a harpooner, all hands might go below and remain until eight bells (eight o'clock) the following morning.

When aroused, not only did they find a splendid assortment of fruit alongside, but the anchor watch had been busy fishing, and the appetising odour of fresh fish being cooked greeted their nostrils as they came on deck. It was a happy breakfast party held forward that morning. Sweet potatoes, fried fish, coffee, and soft bread, with oranges and bananas to follow, made up a meal which, after their late terrible experiences, seemed to them the richest banquet imaginable. As soon as breakfast was over, their heavy task began. First of all, they got under weigh, and worked the vessel in as near the shore as possible. Then, having moored her head and stern, they commenced operations by discharging her cargo, lowering the casks of oil into the water and towing them to the beach, where they were laboriously rolled up above high-water mark. Then, some lighters being hired, all the provisions, movable furniture, clothing, &c., were also discharged, the sails were unbent and sent ashore also, while the upper yards were sent down and floated alongside. A great raft was made ready to work upon, and then the vessel was hauled in as closely as she would go in her now

empty condition to the beach, the cutting falls secured to the fore and main lower mastheads, and the two bower anchors laid out shoreward. This heavy toil occupied four days. Then came Sunday, when, comfortably housed in tents of their own rigging ashore, the weary crew enjoyed a long luxurious day's rest, helped by a very homely service of thanksgiving conducted by the skipper.

On Monday the great work of repairing the ship's bottom began by attaching the cutting falls to the bower anchors, leading the hauling parts ashore, and heaving the ship down upon her side until her keel was exposed. It was then found that the leak was in the garboard-strake, or the next plank to the keel, and manfully did the carpenter, the cooper, and as many of the crew as could handle a tool, attack the work of repair. Four days from sunrise to sunset were spent in this labour, then, satisfied that all was right on the starboard side, the skipper ordered the vessel to be turned round and the other side hove out for the same treatment.

It is very wonderful to consider in how few words—in a sentence, for instance, like the preceding one—can be described an enormous amount of work. A whole chapter might easily be devoted to the elucidation of the various processes necessary for the performance of this work spoken of so baldly, but I am afraid it would be far from interesting. Sufficient, perhaps, to say that these duties, involving so much painful labour, and for so long a time, are now performed in dry docks or on patent slips with a celerity and ease that, considering the bulk and weight of modern ships, would be nothing short of

miraculous to a casual observer unversed in engineering feats.

Fortunately the men were all contented with as well as interested in their work. They had grown to love the ship as they had the captain and officers, and so each duty, however hard or unpleasant, was gaily performed, and apparently without half the labour expended on similar tasks by discontented men. At the expiration of a month from the time of entering Mahé the ship was again ready for sea. 'Tight as a bottle,' said the proud carpenter, who had worked like any three men, and, besides, had managed to teach much of his art to sailors (farmers most of them a year ago), so that they were able to assist him, not merely in sawing, hauling, or chopping, but in much more important detail work. No man had given any trouble. Loafing natives or beach-comers of doubtful nationality, skulking around for an opportunity to do mischief by purveying a peculiarly vile brand of fire-water, were sternly warned off the premises of the sailors—told to keep outside a certain area set apart as the special grounds of the men of the *Xiphias*.

When the work was all done, the cargo reshipped, and the *Xiphias* quite ready for sea, Captain Hampden called all hands aft, and said: 'Men, I'm dredful proud of ye. Ye've take the last ounce out of yourselves, you've never given me a minute's uneasiness, and I don't know how to thank ye enough. But I got it in my head that as we are all ready to sail to-morrow if need be, maybe yew'd some of yew like a little run loose with some money of your own, and if so I feel that yew're all so worthy of trust that

I ought to give yew the opportunity, and I will—if yew want it. Ef not, I'll gladly go with yew to a regular picnic down to one of these beautiful outlying beaches. We'll take all our own provisions, we'll cook them ourselves, every man shall amuse himself just as he likes, fishing, rambling, swimming, or what not, and we shall come aboard tired out with real enjoyment, but happy and not a cent poorer in pocket or health. Now, all those in favour of my scheme step forward—those that want to go by themselves and spend their own money remain behind.'

All hands stepped forward but two harpooners. The prospect of such a 'Sunday School outing,' as one of them termed it, did not appeal to them—they were men, not babies. So they went both of them together in search of what they considered to be enjoyment, while Captain Hampden and all hands, except the mate (Mr. Peck), the carpenter, and steward, left the ship on their excursion, and spent a day of unalloyed pleasure, happy as a lot of children let loose from school. And if any old sailor turns up his nose at this I would like to ask him, as an honest fellow, to tell me how much enjoyment he ever got prowling about the purlieus of a great seaport from one dirty public-house to another, always meeting the same kind of furtive-eyed loafer and blatant female, and always pounced upon by these harpies with shouts of welcome, changing into derisive curses as soon as they found he had no more money to spend on them or to give them? I have no doubt but that his answer would be that it was all sickening and exasperating in the last degree, but as long as

he knew of no other way in which to spend his money and leisure, it was not his fault that he behaved as an utter idiot.

But enough of this. The two malcontents returned in the morning sadly, having had their enjoyment and looking fearfully the worse for it. No one said anything to them about their experiences, and they did not volunteer any information, but it was at least a fortnight before they had regained their healthy appearance, and a much longer time before they had lost a certain hanging of the head. This last was novel, and would not have been the case, but that they had been practically alone in their folly. And, perhaps, there was just a little of the Pharisee's attitude in their shipmates, who, having chosen to keep out of harm's way, were inclined to be inordinately proud of their virtue. It is this which makes so many Christians offensive, makes them shunned by those who are really penitent. They do not understand the Divine pity nor the Divine humility, much less endeavour to practise them, and so repel those whom they are professing to try and attract.

At noon that day the *Xiphias* sailed short-handed by the loss of those six fine men (for recruits were not to be obtained in Mahé), but well equipped again for the voyage. She now carried seven boats—five in the davits and two on the skids aft, and all repairs had been substantially carried out. As soon as she was clear of the land and heading across east for the archipelago, Captain Hampden called all hands aft, and in their presence complimented the carpenter for his noble efforts and his great skill. The Captain

said that what he had done was truly above all reward, but as a mark of his appreciation he had much pleasure in handing Chips an order on the owners for \$250 = £50. Chips turned brick red, fidgeted, shuffled, and finally said, 'Thankee, sir.' More than that he could not say—he was one of those doers who cannot talk. But the men cheered him to the echo, and another kindly link in the chain which bound all hands was forged.

That evening Captain Hampden communicated to his officers his plans. He intended making a passage with all possible speed to the Bonins, hoping there to pick up half-a-dozen good men, and then go on the Japan ground for a season—it being then at the height of its fame. But, he said, he was not without hope that on the way thither they might meet with some whales, and be fortunate enough to obtain such an addition to their stock as would repay them for their recent losses. All the officers were in the best possible spirits. They felt that, depleted as the crew was, if only favoured with opportunity they would all give the best possible account of themselves, and each reiterated his firm belief that this would yet be a most successful voyage. Then they separated for the night.

At daylight in the morning the gladsome cry was again heard from the crow's-nest notifying the nearness of sperm-whales. And for the next week they had a real, old-fashioned busy time. They killed four fine large bulls, one of which was apparently very sick, and, besides, so fat that each lance-thrust was almost like piercing a bladder of lard. So peculiar was his lethargy that, in the absence

of any apparent reason for it in the shape of recent encounters with whalers, the Captain decided upon an unusual examination of the body, which, favoured by wonderfully fine weather and a smooth sea, Mr. Peck was able to accomplish successfully. The search revealed an enormous mass of ambergris, packed tightly in the lower bowel, and weighing over two hundredweight. This alone at the lowest possible quotation of \$5 an ounce represented nearly \$18,000, or about £3,500, more than the value of the whole four whales put together, although in those days sperm oil and spermaceti were easily worth \$500 per tun to the ship.

All hands rejoiced exceedingly, feeling that the monetary loss of their late disaster was well wiped out, and anticipating again a most prosperous voyage. Heartened and encouraged thus, they worked so splendidly that by the time they reached the Sunda Straits the vessel was in her normal state of cleanliness and fitness for further adventure. But none came along. They just glided quietly through the straits, buying up with great delight the stores of fruit and vegetables brought by the islanders, who could hardly believe their good fortune. For most of the sailing ships that loiter through there do not yield the canoe-men much profit—the trade is mostly barter, an old shirt for a punnet of sweet potatoes, a pair of shoes for a section bunch of bananas, &c. And the demand for monkeys, parrots, musk-deer, &c., has greatly fallen off even in homeward bound ships. The *Xiphias'* crew, however, took all the fresh food that came along, and got it a bargain, because they paid for it in silver dollars or five-franc pieces, money

current all over the islands of the Indian Ocean from Madagascar to Singapore.

All the way along from Anjer to Luzon they coasted peacefully, keeping wide-eyed watch for possible thieves—it would be using too big a word to call them pirates—who, even to this day, are ever ready to pounce upon a helpless craft and rifle her, incidentally killing her crew. Our splendid sea-patrol, ever engaged in keeping the peace all round the world, is specially busy in Eastern waters protecting the world's commerce from these polyglot marauders, and on the East Coast of Africa in suppressing slavery. Yet for this truly beneficent work one never hears a word of praise. All our sins, or even our supposed sins, are remembered—not merely, I regret to say, on the Continent of Europe, where we expect it to be so, but in the United States of America, and all our good deeds are studiously ignored, or, worse still, distorted into deep-dyed hypocritical designs upon some innocent people's independence. But I often wonder what would become of Eastern commerce if the British Fleet in those seas were to be suddenly withdrawn.

One more piece of good fortune awaited the *Xiphias* and her good crew before getting clear of those mazy waters. It was just after they had cleared the Molucca Passage, and were hauling up north for the Bonins. About half an hour before sunset the fore crow's-nest reported something, he didn't know what, but it was making a tremendous commotion in the water away ahead about four or five miles. The vessel being under full sail, and with a moderate breeze, nothing more could be done but keep her as

she was going, except that Captain Hampden mounted up to the fore-topgallant yard with his glasses and succeeded in noting a black object in the sea. No more disturbance was visible. The sun went down, the quick tropical twilight faded into night, and still the skipper kept his eyes fixed upon the spot. Then to his great joy the moon rose—in that clear atmosphere shedding a flood of light along the sea. Suddenly the skipper's voice rang out of the darkness above: 'Lower away y'r boat, Mr. Peck, an' keep her jest ez we're goin'. I think yew'll find somethin' worth havin' jest ahead there. The res' of th' hands shorten sail an' heave ship to.' 'Aye, aye, sir,' responded the cheery voice of the mate. And in about three minutes the vessel was lying-to, the rattle of boat's falls was heard, and the faint glimmer of a lantern was seen as Mr. Peck sped away along the lane of silver sheen spread by the moon on the surface of the quiet waters. He was no sooner gone than the skipper reached the deck, and immediately kept the ship away again after the boat. In half an hour all hands were straining to get alongside the biggest whale any of them had ever seen, slain apparently by one of his fellows, since his jaw and part of his throat were completely torn away. Thus, without any effort on their part, beyond realising the spoil, they had gained a prize worth about \$6,000; a sort of crumb flung to them out of the boundless wealth of the sea.

And now, much to my sorrow, we must part company with Captain Hampden and his crew. The further matters treated of in this history do not concern him: he did not even hear of them till two

years later. It would be a pleasant task to tell of how he reached the Bonins in peace, and found there the recruits he needed, also an indefinite rumour, which gave him many anxious hours, of some men having been there in the *Grampus*, who said they had been lost from his ship. For his own peace of mind he was bound to put it down to one of those loosely invented tales that ship-frequenters in foreign ports concoct in order to get on fairly intimate speaking terms with shipmen ; terms which, skilfully manipulated, should result in profit to the tale-tellers. Also of how, through the usual thrilling series of adventures which always fell to the lot of a whaleship in those days out for a three-years' cruise to the uttermost parts of the sea, Captain Hampden and his men passed unscathed bodily and exceedingly prosperous financially, since the *Xiphias* returned, having been absent three years to the week, with almost the largest cargo ever brought from the depths of the sea to New Bedford, or, indeed, any other port in New England.

But that must not be. Our business now is with the *Grampus*, and to her, however unwillingly, we must return, bidding the *Xiphias* a long farewell.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CHECK TO THE KING, AND A NEW MOVE

AS on a previous and never-to-be-forgotten occasion, in the midst of the multifarious activities prevailing on the deck of the *Grampus* there was a sense of profound peace. And now there was also a feeling of fierce delight that their tyrant was tasting in his own body some of the pains he had so joyously inflicted upon others. All the white men's faces wore a pleasant expression, not at all mitigated by the presence of the Portuguese jealously noting the satisfaction and fully aware of its cause. And, human nature being what it is, there is no doubt whatever that had Captain Da Silva died, his Portuguese henchmen would have been compelled to eat the humblest of humble-pie, or commit themselves to a fearful mutiny with all its consequences.

Mr. Court moved majestically among the toilers with the air of a man from whom an awful incubus has been removed, and to whom has come a veritable inspiration. He did not shout; all his orders were issued quietly, but how wise and far-seeing were all his arrangements! And, first of all, he told off Mr. Pease to watch Rube, who was fighting with all the splendid reserve of force in his clean, healthy body against the encroaching Angel of Death. Mr. Court's

reasons for this were two-fold. First, he needed badly to show his detestation of the malice which had placed this fine officer in the position of a seaman, and next he had noticed that in Rube's delirium one name continually fell from his lips like a peal of dactyls, 'Priscilla, Priscilla, Priscilla.' And Mr. Court knew that Priscilla was the name of his skipper's wife. Therefore, although he fully believed poor Rube's chanting of that name to be a mere coincidence, he knew how essential it was that the skipper should not hear of it. For he was sure that in that case Rube's days would be few and evil, supposing the skipper to live. So calling Mr. Pease to him, after being exceedingly careful to see that none of the Dagoes was within earshot, he explained the matter to him carefully, winding up by saying that at least until the devil was unchained again, he (Mr. Court) would see that a brother officer was, as far as possible, saved from the degradation deliberately prepared for him.

All this, of course, was seen, noted, and commented upon by the Portuguese, secure in the general utter ignorance of their language by the white men, and consequently not needing to get away in private for consultation. But all they could do under present circumstances was to 'bide their time, doing their duty meanwhile as before, for they knew quite enough of their skipper to be sure that no amount of favouritism would be held to excuse slackness of work when money-making was to the fore. And as the Americans worked now with a hearty good will because of the absence of the skipper, it was truly marvellous to see how the tremendous task of cutting-in and trying-out was tackled. A spirit of

emulation was abroad, manifesting itself in extraordinary ways. For instance, a lean American from Connecticut, who had somehow learned to swim splendidly, was down on the back of a whale for the purpose of hooking a mighty iron hook into what is called the 'rising,' or eye-piece. He sprang there at the word, alighting in the foul pool of grease and blood and salt water at the same moment as a gigantic Portuguese, but just as they both reached out for the hook a big swell came along, the ship gave a heave, and a vast volume of water swept over the carcass, washing both the men into the sea alongside, which as usual was alive with sharks. They disappeared for a moment among the shovel heads and dorsal fins crowding round ; then, springing to the surface, Nat, the American, snatched at a strip of blubber, and by sheer agility flung himself back to his former position, grabbing at the dangling hook as he reached it, and yelling in a half-strangled voice, 'Heave away !' Then, with a contemptuous look at the Dago struggling to climb back, he seized the already rising parts of the tackle and swung himself on deck. The Dago's friends had flung him a rope, and he mounted easily enough by its aid, but their remarks to him, aided by the satisfied chuckles of the white men, seemed to depress him very much. He was about to slouch off to the foc'sle to change, when Mr. Court's voice rang out clearly :

' Whar you goin' ? '

' Changea me close,' was the sullen answer.

' You git right on with the work,' said Mr. Court, and, taken by surprise, the man obeyed. He and his countrymen felt that it was only another item in the

account to be paid off presently when their champion returned to his command.

Below, however, that champion was in evil case. In his previous mishap, although his bruises were many and severe, there had been no bones broken, but now his injuries were of so extensive a character that he could hardly find energy enough to curse his wife and the steward, his only attendants. In fact, the conditions of things were entirely altered. Mr. Court, in full vigour, was in charge, and came in to report to him twice a day in the most formal manner how matters were progressing on deck. The mate never asked him how he was, never attempted any conversation, and, after the report had been made, only answered questions, and that in the curtest manner possible. At certain intervals, being responsible for his commander's welfare, he made careful examination of the injuries, and saw that they were doing as well as possible under the circumstances. Also he gave the steward secret orders that all the ventilation possible should be secured in the cabin for the Captain's wife's sake, who throughout this trying time, as before, scarcely ever left her husband's side.

On deck Rube progressed most favourably. His splendid constitution won in the great fight, and when at last he opened his eyes sanely on his devoted nurse, that much-tried man made up his mind at once that Rube would live. No matter that he was worn to a shadow, that he looked even worse than when rescued from the boat, he had evidently got a grip on life which he had no idea of relinquishing just yet. He wanted to live, and, as all doctors know, that is the great factor in the problem of recovery from any

illness. But Mr. Pease was mightily puzzled as Rube grew stronger to find him so constantly referring to the early incidents occurring during the cruise of the *Xiphias*. He seemed to have no knowledge whatever of the stirring events which had happened since. Also Mr. Pease noticed that his eyes had an anxious careworn look in them as of a man who feels that the threads of his life are all entangled, and that he has no ability to clear them. He had, besides, a habit of muttering to himself and of mentioning names all unfamiliar to Mr. Pease, as if by some freak of memory a certain portion of his life, utterly forgotten until now, had just been recalled, while another portion, much more recent in its incidence upon his brain, had become completely obliterated. There was as well an utter absence of that cheery, wide-eyed outlook which he used to wear, the true expression of the Biblical injunction to take no thought for the morrow. Moreover, he was so anxious to get well. He did not know where he was, except that he was at sea and ill, and his helplessness worried him much. It took all Mr. Pease's power of persuasion to convince him that by worrying he was retarding his own recovery, and that, as matters were, it really did not matter a pin whether he was fit again in a week or a month. But it was a difficult job to explain things to a man who knew absolutely nothing about the necessary details, who remembered nothing at all of the happenings of the last eleven months. At last Mr. Pease sought an audience of the mate, taking care that there should be a white man at the wheel, and that all the rest of the hands should be busy forward.

To him Mr. Pease told all that he knew about Rube, of his joining the ship, of his terrible accident and recovery therefrom, how since then he had always behaved more like an angel than a man, and how every man on board had grown from deriding him to loving him—in fact, the story which the reader knows. During the recital Mr. Court glanced from time to time most curiously at Mr. Pease, as if wondering whether the latter were crazed or not. Nor could this be wondered at, remembering the life Mr. Court had been leading in the *Grampus*. What wonder that he had come to disbelieve in the existence of a God at all?—having always been indifferent in his acceptance of the existence of a Supreme Being as a matter of course, and since he had been mate of the *Grampus* having grown certain that whether there was a God or not there must be a devil, and that this devil was apparently permitted to have everything his own way for the present. Now he was interested in spite of himself at the idea of one greenie having been permitted to alter the character of everybody on board his ship. Also he told Mr. Pease how Rube's present condition was entirely due to his interference on behalf of his former officer. At this news, now first made known to him, Mr. Pease bowed his head, saying :

‘Wall, I alwuz thought he wuz a sure-’nough angel, but I never calculated on him so nearly coming to his death for me. Anyway, my life’s his frum this eout, ef he wants it—there’s no question ‘bout that.’

Now, whether it was the intensity of devotion manifested towards Rube thenceforward by Mr. Pease, or his own innate vigour asserting itself, is no doubt

a moot point, but certainly from that day Rube's recovery was exceedingly rapid. But he was puzzled beyond expression at his former mate's dog-like affection for him, also at the want of deference shown to Mr. Pease by all hands. And as it was entirely useless trying to remember anything about recent events or to understand what he was told about them, he resigned himself to the mystery. Long before the skipper was able to move sufficiently to come on deck he had resumed his place among the crew, and was doing his work, but with a hesitation, awkwardness, and want of spring that made Mr. Pease tremble for his welfare when once the skipper had again taken command of the ship.

With that consummate ability for navigating difficult seas that seems inherent in American whaling officers, Mr. Court had, despite his limitation of access to the means of navigation, due to the Captain's behaviour, brought the *Grampus* through the intricacies of those waters south of Celebes, and had steered her safely past the western end of New Guinea out to the southward of the Pelew Islands before Captain Da Silva came on deck. I have purposely avoided all mention of his behaviour while thus laid helpless a second time, for the subject is such a painful one that it is difficult to do more than hint at it. A wounded tiger would certainly have been far more docile, and have repaid his nurses with much more gratitude than this man, from whom every one of the Divine qualities of our nature seemed to have been withheld. Doubtless this vile temper did much to delay his recovery, but that he could not see; and hard as his language was to bear,

the mate felt that it was infinitely better to listen to it occasionally below than to have his presence on deck again. And as the news of his approaching recovery crept about the ship, every white man, except Rube, kept repeating to himself most fervently, 'Oh, if he would only die!'—'he,' of course, being the common enemy. As for Priscilla, the long confinement and constant strain of nursing this terrible man had worn her to a shadow. He did not abuse her so much now, but she had to listen constantly to his abuse of others, listen to his furious conversations with his Portuguese harpooneers, who were daily summoned below to his bedside to report to him their observations of how the Yankee unmentionables were handling the ship. But this latter affected her as little as the former, which she could understand. The abominable phrases in her own language fell upon utterly unheeding ears, and left no more impression than did the imprecations in an unknown tongue. What she was suffering from was purely physical, as it had been before reaching the Cosmoledos.

At last one lovely morning, with the ship's head pointed towards the Bonins under his instructions, the skipper gave orders that Pedro and Manuel should attend him and assist him on deck. He needed help. He was worn to a shadow, his face was like a hatchet for sharpness of outline, and many threads of white appeared in his hair and whiskers. But from out the caverns whither his eyes had retreated gleamed the same infernal fires: the indomitable will had not been subdued in the slightest degree. Upon reaching the deck, he cast a com-

prehensive glance around the vessel. She was like a new pin for cleanliness, not a rope yarn was awry, and most of the watch were busy scraping the spare spars, always a favourite device with him when nothing else could be found for them to do.

From forward came the clink, clink of iron where the remainder of the men were beating iron-rust off the anchors and cables. Everything was going, in fact, as goes a good watch after it has been wound by the master's hand. There was absolutely nothing to find fault with, yet the mate surely knew that fault would be found. So he stood near, offering no salutation nor expecting any, but awaiting the contemptuous burning words he knew would soon be flung at him. Suddenly the skipper said, without looking at the mate :

'Wall, seems yew've mistook th' ship fur a pleasure boat. Wut in thunder yew ben doin' all the way up hyar from Borneo ?'

'Doin' wut hed t' be done, 'n' doin' it well too,' growled Mr. Court. 'Wat d'ye expect I'd be doin', ef I mout be askin' ?'

'Ha, *ther's* wut ye ben doin', is it—gittin' things ripe fur a mut'ny a'gin' me. All right. I'm layin' fur ye. Y' mout hev made sure while I ben lyin' thar he'pless ef yew hed th' grit ov a purp, but yew haint, yew——' There is no need to suggest the remainder of the vile sentence. But Mr. Court had found time not only to recover his self-control and respect, but to gauge the capacity of Captain Da Silva's supporters to overcome the white portion of the crew. Moreover he had, with commendable fore-thought, drawn the stings of the harpooners and as

many of the foremost Portuguese hands as he could convict of possessing them—that is, he had taken away their revolvers and ammunition, and by perfect equality of treatment had re-established a proper order of things in the foc'sle. All of these things Captain Da Silva, with his almost superhuman grasp of matters only faintly shadowed forth to his senses, had already seen except the disarming of his gang. He was not likely to mistake the import of the change in Mr. Court's tone and bearing towards him. It was a heavy blow, but he was wily as a snake, and immediately changing his tone slightly, he resumed :

'Thar, I s'pose it's no use makin' more trouble than that's any need fur. P'raps I'm a bit frazzled eout with lyin' below like a gutted herrin'. Anyhaow, I guess I'll be all right time we git on the Jappan groun', an' then we'll hev some fun. Hyar! Manuel, Pedro, come an' git me b'low 'gen. I ain't feelin' good a bit.'

As the two scowling dark men passed him and placed each an arm carefully behind the skipper's back to assist him down into the cuddy, Mr. Court viewed them with clear eyes, saying nothing, but pondering a great deal. He was not in the least deceived by the change in his skipper's tone. He knew full well that no stone would be left unturned to do him a mischief, and he determined to treble his vigilance and that of his compatriot officers in order to guard against any sudden surprise, and, satisfied that he was doing all that in him lay both for duty and self-preservation, he turned away and resumed his daily business of supervision.

What he did not, could not, know was that by his

resolute bearing and brave words he had saved one of his countrymen from being put to the torture. It had been the skipper's determination when he came on deck to see his cruel intention towards Rube carried out, and, as we know, he was not easily turned away from his purpose. Ever since he had regained consciousness the idea of breaking his will upon Rube—first as being one of the rescued boat's crew he had been, as it were, driven to save ; and, secondly, as the successful opponent of that will—had been fermenting in his busy brain, and at the earliest possible opportunity he had appeared on deck for the purpose of putting it into practice. But for the first time that voyage he had found himself successfully thwarted by one of the hated Americans, and he needed all his marvellous powers of self-control and dissimulation not to indulge in some frantic outburst that would certainly have resulted in his being disabled from doing any more harm that cruise. His cup of humiliation was not yet full either. As they went slowly down the companion-way, Manuel whispered to him in Portuguese :

‘ Do you know that the mate has taken away our weapons ? ’

‘ What ! ’ he hissed, and wrenching himself free from Pedro on the other side, he struck at Manuel with all his might, and missed him, falling down four stairs upon his injured side, and lying there foaming with pain and fury. Manuel, his face green with rage, turned upon his heel and remounted the cabin stairs. What black thoughts filled his heart we cannot tell, but certainly the cost of that injudicious outburst to Captain Da Silva was an exceedingly

heavy one. He reckoned too much upon the perfect subjugation of his countrymen to his will, forgetting the obvious fact that if you give your subordinates too much power over you they are apt to use it at inconvenient times, to the complete upheaval and reversal of some of your most cherished plans.

Pedro, alarmed at the Captain's condition, for the latter was quite beside himself with agony, called in that subdued voice common to sailors when they are in the cabin, 'Madem, senhora, Missis, Capena very too mucha bad ; pleasea come !' But there was no answer. Nor could be, for Priscilla, completely worn out, was lying in a dead faint upon the settee in their little state-room. The mate was away forward conducting the work, the steward was busy washing clothes on deck, and poor Pedro, looking upon his skipper's horribly distorted face, listening to the gnashing of his teeth and watching the writhings of his body, forgot everything but the need for instant aid, and shouted, 'On deck, dere, somebody, anybody, comea down here quick !' At that moment Rube was on his way to relieve the wheel, being now fully recovered as far as physical strength went. With one glance at the sphinx-like face of the helmsman, Rube sprang down the companion, finding the skipper in convulsions, and Pedro at his wits' end to know what to do. Together they raised the twisting body and carried it into the state-room, where the first object which met Rube's eyes was the apparently lifeless form of his loved and lost Priscilla.

For a moment all things reeled with him, and then, quietly laying the skipper on the deck, and controlling himself by a Titanic effort, he said,



THE APPARENTLY LIFELESS FORM OF HIS LOVED AND LOST PRISCILLA.



'Pedro, some water—quick!' Even as he did so and Pedro started off, Priscilla gave a deep, deep sigh, opened her eyes, and seeing a strange man before her, made an effort to rise, while a faint tinge of pink came into her face. But with a mingled pang of regret and thankfulness Rube saw that there was no recognition in the look—he was just one of the crew to her, and nothing more. And then, to his intense relief, came hurrying the steward and the mate, called frantically by Pedro. Rube stole away, leaving the new-comers to render such aid as was possible, and wearily crept to the wheel, taking absolutely no heed of the bitter words with which he was greeted by the waiting helmsman.

A trick at the wheel by a good steersman is a splendid place for meditation. For while the mechanical section of the brain is busy with the primal duty of keeping the particular point of the course given as near the 'lubber's point,' or line drawn on the inner rim of the compass-bowl, corresponding to the midship line of the ship, as circumstances will allow, the lobes devoted to thought may be fully occupied with the most recondite speculations. May be, but are not often, for your ordinary sailor is a most unimaginative human animal. Reuben, however, for the first half-hour of the present 'trick' found the meditative side of his brain one seething whirlpool surging around its vortex. 'Priscilla is aboard this ship.' True, she had not recognised him, and that was, so far, a gain ; but how could he control himself? His speech, his looks? Moreover, she was unhappy. How much so he did not, could not, know, for the reasons that have

before been fully given ; but that wan face, those thin hands, those deeply shadowed eyes, what a tale of misery they had to tell to a loving heart like Rube's ! Yet even had he not been powerless to do anything, loyalty, honour, truth demanded that he should be silent, cost what it might, unless he saw danger to that dear life. Then the problem of her being here at all suddenly came back with awful force. And utterly confounded, he lifted his heart again to God, not blithely or hopefully, but in a sort of mechanical way, or instinctively, if it be better put so. Instantly a great peace fell upon him. A merciful veil stole down between him and his mental troubles, and the utter blankness of want of thought enwrapped his mind.

In the cabin the mate and the steward had laboured manfully at their task, although much hampered by the want of knowledge of how this condition of things had been brought about. Priscilla had fully recovered consciousness, but was still too weak to help. Still she was no hindrance. She was just watching, and claiming no attention. Mr. Court found several of his bandages displaced, much of the laceration re-opened, and altogether the patient in a bad way. With native skill and judgment he did his best to make his tyrant comfortable, and then having instructed the steward to devote his whole time to the Captain and his wife, returned on deck and sent for the two Portuguese.

'Now,' said Mr. Court sternly, when they appeared, 'I got to know wut yew two ben a-doin' t' th' Captain Yew wuzn't thar, Manuel, when I kem an' Pedro wuz. Wut d' ye go 'way fur ?' Volubly

Pedro began, but the mate in a roar bade him 'shet erp,' and turning to Manuel, said quietly, 'Heave ahead.'

'Well, sah,' said Manuel savagely, 'we's a-he'pin' ole man daown companyon, an' ole man le's go my arm an' hits me. Then he fall daown steps. I don' care if he break his neck, so I don' go daown 'n' look. I kem on deck. Dat's all, sah.' And this lucid explanation he followed up with asseverations unprintable—indeed, untranslatable.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE EDUCATION OF THE SKIPPER

IN spite of the gravity of his position, a smile broke over Mr. Court's rugged face as he realised the situation. All unversed in any Machiavellian arts of diplomacy, he had unwittingly, by straightforward conduct, driven a wedge into the base of the vile edifice so laboriously reared by his commander. For it was impossible for him to help seeing how deep was Manuel's resentment at the treatment meted out to him by the Captain, although the reason for the outburst was entirely hidden from the mate. He was seriously troubled in his mind, though, about Priscilla. How to proceed in order to save her from another painful illness he did not know. For he felt that, though he could and would dare a good deal now to keep the ship from becoming a den of wild beasts as far as the crew was concerned, interference between the skipper and his wife was quite another matter.

Yet, could he see her die? For that sad event seemed to him entirely probable within the next few days. She looked so frail, almost transparent, wax-like, in her perfect colourlessness of skin from her long seclusion, and, which alarmed him most, —there was a vacant, far-away look in her eyes

that was most uncanny to him. He discussed the situation at great length with the second mate, who was fast recovering from the morbid condition of mind into which he had been thrown by the continued success of the skipper. But discuss as they might there seemed no solution of this difficult problem—indeed, as they vividly remembered, the chief difficulty was Priscilla herself, who, loyal to the core, would not, whatever her sufferings, do or say anything which might in her estimation weaken her husband's authority.

So, with a heavy sigh, the two good fellows would close their conference and part, the one to his dreamless bunk, the other to his four hours' tramp up and down the small area of the *Grampus's* quarter-deck, revolving, almost maddeningly, all sorts of schemes for a further amelioration of the present conditions.

I fear that many ship officers, whether of merchant ships, whaleships, or men-of-war, deliberately cultivate a kind of stultification of the mental faculties while on watch. The mechanical side of the brain previously spoken of will go on doing its part no matter how dense have become the thinking processes. But that any intelligent man should set himself to become a Peter Bell, who 'whistled as he went for want of thought,' is akin to the idea of a man who should hermetically seal up his nostrils so that he should not smell, or render himself colour-blind so that pictures should not appeal to him, or cultivate stone-deafness in order not to enjoy harmony. It is true that to a highly sensitive, overstrung organisation such an ordeal as

a cruise in a whaler must be a terrible one. For there are no inducements to 'get there.'

'Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.'

This condition of things, so wonderfully portrayed by Coleridge, is well-nigh intolerable to a merchantman, whose employment probably depends upon the smartness of his passage : to the whaler it matters no more than it does to the steamship, for exactly the opposite reason. The one doesn't care because his engines are doing the work and his ship's swift passage through the stagnant air makes a pleasant breeze ; the other doesn't care because he isn't going anywhere, and consequently the longer he loiters where he is the more chances there are of his seeing what he wishes to see—whales.

In the foc'sle there was a marked improvement in the mental and moral atmosphere. Released from the awful nightmare of the skipper's presence, and quite conscious of the fact that the officers were in sympathy with them, the white men grew cheerful and spoke boldly. Moreover, the disarmament of the Portuguese had a splendid effect. It enabled men, hitherto silent under gross provocation because they wanted to live a little longer, to lift up their heads and speak with the enemy in the gate. This feeling of freedom culminated one day in a huge Portuguese ordering a smart little Yankee from Edgar town to 'git away wiv that face while I sit-a down com'ble.' The invited party, being at the time sitting on a stool he had made himself, felt naturally

aggrieved, and with a considerable amount of spirit retorted in terms that need not be clearly set down, at the same time retaining his seat. The Portuguese stared stupidly for a breathing space or two, then seizing the little Yankee, flung him in a clucking heap across the foc'sle. But Rube was sitting next to Hiram, and immediately rose, seized the wrists of the black man, and forcing him backwards on to the deck, sat on his chest, saying : 'Looky here, my friend, we've done with this fun. They's goin' to be no more of it unless yew're prepared to take on the job of killing every white man aboard. I doan't kyar much which way 'tis, but *this* hez t' be stopped anyhow.' As soon as he had finished speaking every white man sprang to his feet cheering lustily. The Portuguese looked at each other, Reuben's understudy was allowed to rise, looking foolish and—nothing happened. There was a sense of relief all round, for all felt that the power of the tyrant was broken. And in half an hour all the watch was as chummy as possible, even the bruised Hiram feeling quite satisfied—at least he expressed himself so to be.

Naturally there was a perceptible falling-off in the smartness with which the ship was worked. That was inevitable. In a small unlimited monarchy, such as a ship must be, you cannot have divided rule without a certain loss of power. Mr. Court fought against this tendency with all his might, but do what he would he could not quite overcome it. Still, the only visible effect of the ferment that was going on below was that no whales were sighted, and that of course might be due to natural causes. Four times every day Mr. Court went below and attended on

his skipper, always looking stealthily at Mrs. Da Silva as he did so, whenever he could look unobserved, and endeavouring to note any change that should make it imperative for him to interfere actively on her behalf. There was none, however. She seemed to exist and do her duty to her husband automatically, but to grow no worse even in the close confinement of that tiny cabin. But anything more absolutely hopeless than her whole pose was surely never seen.

There was a great change in the skipper, though. Since his mad outburst of rage at Manuel and its result he had to all outward seeming been a different man. His injuries, so rudely handled, resented fiercely their treatment, and for long he had lain in high fever, alternating with periods of utter exhaustion. Only his splendid physique and iron constitution, aiding the careful nursing he received, pulled him through. And as he slowly progressed towards convalescence, he looked strangely at Priscilla, not gratefully, but with some such expression as the West African savage regards his 'ju-ju,' believing it all powerful to harm or help him as the case might present itself to the reasoning powers of the dreadful thing. A resolution slowly shaped itself in his brain that come what would he must be very careful of this white, frail woman, who seemed to have passed completely beyond the reach of all the emotions. And he determined to get better in order to carry out this resolve, although had he been capable of entertaining the feeling it would surely have forced its way into his dark heart that the best way in which he could treat his wife would be to die, and set her

free from the hourly horror of his companionship, which for obvious reasons has not been insisted upon definitely here.

So he mended rapidly—so rapidly, in fact, that one week after he had come to the conclusion above noted he was seated on the top of the little deck aft with Priscilla by his side, both luxuriously inhaling the sweet air as the homely old ship wallowed along northward. It was a heavenly afternoon. The sky had the appearance of a great green field—the first tender, unsullied green of spring, upon which lay billowy masses of fleecy cloud, motionless as masses of whitest wool and arranged in regular rows converging to a point in the south-east. An unaccountable longing for the peace of those heavenly solitudes, a desire to leave behind her the weighing down of her earthly part possessed Priscilla's soul, and quite unnoticed by her the heavy tears rose to her eyes, coursed down her thin cheeks and dropped upon the deck. He, stealthily watching as usual while he was awake, became alarmed, because he had not seen a tear for so long. 'Wut ails ye, Pris?' he inquired anxiously. 'Ain't sick, air ye? C'n I order y' anythin'—c'n I do anythin'?'

Immediately the gracious fountain ceased to flow, and, turning, she looked steadily at him, saying, 'No, thank you, Ramon; I want nothing.'

'Wall, wut ye cryin' fur, then?' he demanded irritably.

'I don't know, Ramon, and, what is more, I didn't know that I was crying until you spoke.'

Then, to her great relief—for her dread was a long and acrid cross-examination by her husband upon

any subject whatever—the skipper half rose from his chair and hissed out, ‘Whar’s the watch? Wut ye all doin’? Look thar!’ Involuntarily Priscilla looked where he pointed, and was filled with admiration and wonder. A mighty sperm whale had risen from unknown depths and roamings within a cable’s length of the ship and lay there, clearly visible in the beautifully transparent blue of the sea, almost motionless. All his majestic outlines defined themselves to the eye, the great down-hanging shaft of the jaw, the huge rotundity of the belly, and the vast fans of the flukes that, apparently motionless, were in reality quivering with receptivity like the diaphragm of a telephone. She had never before seen a whale at close quarters, never had an opportunity of admiring this, the mightiest of all God’s creations in the plenitude of his powers and in his own proper element, and the sight filled her with awe.

The reason of the whale’s nearness to the ship, not merely without alarm—for that can readily be understood, since whales, like other animals, long unmolested become perfectly tame—but without having been previously seen, is not to be very clearly stated. When such an occurrence does take place on board a whaleship there is usually much unpleasantness, because the captain is bound to believe that it proves that the watchers aloft are neglecting their duty, or they would have reported the proximity of the whale before. The supposition is only reasonable because really from the masthead of a ship on a fine day, such as this was, the whole vast circle spread out beneath one looks so small, and objects upon it are so clearly defined, that it seems impossible

for four pairs of eyes to miss the spout of a whale. And as the distance from that height to the visible horizon is not less than fifteen miles, within which in such weather a sperm-whale's spout should be clearly discernible, the whale should have risen twice within the visible range to spout. His utmost speed when going for all he is worth is only about fourteen miles an hour, his usual cruising speed when underneath only about three or four. He can stay down an hour, but rarely exceeds forty-five minutes, and he does not care, unless driven by necessity, to travel fast under water. When he does come to the surface, too, after a stay beneath of that length, he must stay up until he has finished a certain number of inspirations and expirations or 'spoutings out'—fifty, sixty, or seventy, as the case may be. And no matter how hardly he may be pressed by enemies, this always holds good. Yet I have seen a sperm whale rise in ghost-like fashion almost alongside the ship during a stark calm on a day when sea and sky were one flawless expanse of blue, blending into each other at the horizon so perfectly that no one could tell exactly where sea ended and sky began. All hands were most eager to 'raise whale,' for the bounty offered was five pounds—equal to twenty-five dollars—and we had fine men at the mastheads. Yet our first intimation of his appearance was given by himself spouting almost alongside. As silently as shadows we prepared to go after him, but as the boats were about to be lowered he disappeared, nor did we ever catch a glimpse of him again, although all hands clustered aloft straining their eyes in every direction. He vanished so unaccountably that there was an

uneasy feeling on board that what we had all seen was no whale at all, but a sportive spook sent to befool us by some sarcastic sea-demon. There is no doubt that both coming and going were exceptions to all the ordinary laws governing the actions of the whale-folk.

All this explanatory matter, taking so long to set down, was as familiar as breathing to Captain Da Silva, yet his only emotion upon 'raising' the whale so closely alongside was black, murderous rage. He dared not shout for fear of scaring or 'galleying' the whale. But his enforced quiet made his hissed-out orders sound all the more furious. The men flew to their stations silently. The boats were lowered by inches at a time, and with the utmost deliberation, lest the rattle of the patent sheaves should alarm the as yet unconscious monster. Only two boats went—the mate's and the second mate's—and the skipper sat on his high perch and watched them depart with bitter muttered comments upon all they did. Every movement was criticised as if the makers of it were 'greenies' just commencing the great business. And the worst of the matter was that the men in the boats knew this. It made them less confident than they would otherwise have been, and therefore they felt as if they were going into a fight whereof the issue was already half decided against them.

Still, they paddled steadily towards the foe without him betraying by the slightest sign a knowledge of any danger likely to be threatening him. By common consent the boats parted company as they neared him, and came on at the great head sheering slightly to either side. Suddenly he saw them or felt them—

no one knows which it is—and with one great sweep of his flukes he leapt forward. Too late. Both boats closed in on him like sentient destroyers, and as if at one signal the harpoons flew from either harpooner's nervous hands and sank quivering into the flank of the whale. Instead of turning to fight, as usual, he settled at once, quite quietly, and immediately the attackers felt an impetus forward, steady and increasing. Away he went, well below, only momentarily breaking the surface to spout, and getting up speed in such a fashion that in a very few minutes, despite the smoothness of the sea, it was evident that all the boatmen could do was to hold on and wait until their gigantic steed tired.

On board the skipper watched with eyes aflame, blaming them all impartially for what he was pleased to call their idiotic behaviour, only his expressions were not so mild as that, and cursing his inability, owing to the absence of wind, to follow them up. Priscilla watched too, fascinated, and all unconscious of the danger the brave fellows were in. And then, with a suddenness seen only in tropical latitudes,

The sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out ;  
At one stride comes the dark ;

and the fleeing boats fade from view. Only then does it dawn upon her what awful danger these men are in, and even then, such is the deadness of her mind, she cannot bring herself to realise as she thinks she ought to do the peril of her shipmates. There is a great silence on board. No one can do anything but wait, except the Captain, who can, and does, keep up a muttered succession of evil words in his own

language. The leaden-footed minutes creep along, the heavy dews fall, a solemn silence, only accentuated by the creak of a spar or the slight rattle of a block, reigns supreme, for the Captain has gone below, and she is up there quite alone. And suddenly relief comes. Into her dry heart there steals the blessed consciousness of God's loving presence, her almost deadened mental perceptions revive on the memory of 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' and immediately she is able to pray. Not for herself—that has not yet come—but for the safety of those whom she has seen go out into the night. Most fervently she implores the Father that they may be preserved through the perils around them, and that when they return (as she at once feels assured they will) her terrible husband may be merciful to them. As she forms the petitions in her heart there is a great cry from many throats, a rushing, roaring sound, a crash, and the babel of many voices. All hands spring into violent activity, and high over all the other sounds rises the voice of the Captain. Another boat is lowered into the darkness, which is presently illuminated in ghastly fashion by a blue light which is fired and spreads its glare all around the ship.

We must leave Priscilla for a few minutes suffering all the tortures of uncertainty, and avail ourselves of our privilege of knowing at once all that is happening. Dragged away at such speed in the darkness, and dependent entirely upon the phosphorescent glare in the water for their knowledge of the whale's whereabouts, the two boats' crews were in no enviable case. But the officers did their manful best, whenever a

slackening in the whale's speed gave them opportunity to get near him, to hurl lances and fire bombs into his shadowy-looking mass. But all had apparently been of little or no avail in staying his forward rush, and as for its direction they knew absolutely nothing. In the midst of this confusion there suddenly towered up before them the great bulk of the ship, menacing like the shadow of death. Both officers drew knives and touched the tow lines, yelling at the same moment, 'Lay off—lay on!' So as the impetus brought them alongside, instead of coming end on at that great speed and being dashed in pieces, one sheered to port and the other to starboard, both intact and safe. They heard the crash, though, in the midst of that strange evolution, and feared the worst. It was not, however, as bad as they feared, although bad enough. The whale, nearing his end, and collecting all his powers to meet it, had suddenly become instinctively aware of the ship confronting him, and, swerving to the left almost cleared her. But his great head struck the rudder such a tremendous blow that it was wrenched from the stern-post, without, however, doing that essential portion of the ship any damage. The rudder was simply gone clean, and none of them ever saw it again.

Then were heard the strange noises made by a whale in its dying agonies close alongside the ship. She rolled and heaved in the swell he made, but he was not near enough to give her another blow. Presently the silence closed in upon them again. It was broken by the skipper, who, excited beyond endurance, yet compelled to inaction, almost screamed, "'Longside thar! See anythin' of th'

whale? Hez he stove in th' counter, or wut? 'R ye all dead? 'n' ef y' ain't, why'nt ye do somethin' or say somethin' 'r make a sign?' Then compliments after his foul fashion.

Presently up out of the darkness came a voice, Mr. Court's:

'All right, sir, we've got hold of him; just passin' tow-line.'

There was a growl like that of a wild beast in response, and an order to light up all the suspended cressets. All hands girded up their loins for the long night's work pending, and as the tow-line was passed on board bent their backs to the task of hauling the great whale alongside, thinking meanwhile of the possibility of his having started a butt when he collided with the stern fittings. Priscilla, her heart full of gratitude for answered prayer, went below, lay down, and in a few minutes slept the blessed sleep of a relieved mind.

All through the night, goaded on by the rasping voice of the skipper, who, perched aloft upon the after platform, suffered terribly from his inability to make himself felt as well as heard, the weary men toiled on. And to such good purpose that when the pageant of morning blazed forth upon the welcoming sky they had actually consummated the cutting-in, and were all ready for the trying-out. The skipper having hobbled below, Mr. Court proceeded to set blubber watches of six hours each, but also gave word to go easy, for he knew, judging by his own feelings, how spent all hands were, and he would not be so foolish as to lay them up. The relieved ones had just cast themselves down as they were

and passed into the depths of utterly exhausted nature's refreshment when, as Mr. Court was diving below to his well-earned rest, the skipper reappeared shouting, 'Lay aft here, yew lazy hogs, 'n' rig a stage over the stern. I want ter git a jury rudder rigged.' Returning to the deck, Mr. Court said gravely, 'Captain, that kind o' thing wunt work no more. Yew've gut t' be reasonable. I wunt let ye play the fool with men's lives any more, and ef yew're goin' t' shoot, shoot quick, 'r ye'll be too late.' And Captain Da Silva saw, to his intense amazement, a revolver-barrel gleaming in the fingers of the officer whom in his blind passion and prejudice he had abused as a coward.

His sufferings were terrible to witness. His keen intelligence showed him clearly that at present, at any rate, the mate had the key of the situation, and that again he must stoop to dissimulation where he had been used to enforce his will with the utmost disregard of what anyone thought or felt. At last, when the first few agonising spasms had passed, he mastered himself by a supreme effort and said huskily, 'All right, Mr. Court. It's yewr call. It'll be mine some day. Meanwhile we'll keep eour trouble indoors.'

Raising his voice a little for the benefit of the few haggard-looking, anxious men who were clustered about the mainmast awaiting the word to come aft and recommence work, he said, 'Oh, all right, Mr. Court; I guess we'll leave it a bit. Don' look 's if we sh'd hev enny change in th' weather fur a while, anyhow. We'll git on with th' tryin'-out, 'n' leave th' repairs until she's cleaned erp agen. Thet'll

do th' watch below,' he snarled in conclusion. And the worn-out men shuffled away.

Without another word Mr. Court descended to his bunk, not, to be sure, without many misgivings as to whether, in the absence of any defence to his sleeping-place, any door to bar, he should, in the quaint sailor phrase, 'wake up and find himself dead.' But he reasoned, and correctly, that under present conditions the skipper would hardly proceed to open murder, for open it must be since four men would be in full view of the crime if it were done while he slept. And with a final, 'Well, I kain't he'p it, anyhaow; mout so well die this way 's any other, fur all I k'n see,' the mate turned in, put his loaded revolver under his pillow, and in two minutes was fast asleep.

The Captain, in spite of his weakened body, of his still aching limbs, paced the narrow limits of the cabin like a caged leopard, his mind seething with deadly thoughts about the mate and, in a lesser degree, all the members of his crew. For this was the first voyage of his career as captain that any of his ship's company had been able to oppose his will successfully. Also it was the first voyage of his life that he had suffered so much in his own body, and he was gravely in doubt as to what the change meant. He was inclined to lay all his disasters at the door of his wife; but of her he was now quite afraid, and, moreover, satisfied that if he were not very careful in his treatment of her worse misfortunes would befall him. These thoughts worried him so much that he had recourse to the bottle, the great store of fiery liquor he had brought on board at Brava having been only slightly encroached upon.

And after a few glasses and a couple of cigars he was reassured as to his own importance and power, feeling, indeed, that his recent fears were quite unwarranted. And yet he could not help casting a curiously furtive glance at the pale, mask-like face of his wife.

The next day, his physical improvement having been well maintained, he took full charge at eight bells in the morning, and all hands fell obediently into line at his word. Work on the blubber proceeded apace, but there was a much more important duty to perform, and that was the rigging of a contrivance by means of which the ship might be steered. Here Captain Da Silva shone as a perfect seaman. He ordered a spar about the size of a medium scaffold-pole to be made into a huge oar, the blade being formed of stout planks bolted together athwart, and the interstices on each side of the spar filled with old chain for weight to keep the machine down. A solid crutch, lined with leather and well greased, was fixed on the taffrail for the upper part of the spar to work in, with plenty of play allowed, but strong lashings to prevent its jumping out of its bed. Also a severe holdfast was made just above the blade of the 'oar,' into which a stout tackle was hooked on either side; the upper blocks of these tackles were led to outriggers over each quarter, and the falls passed into the barrel of the steering wheel. And—of course recognising that a vast amount of uninteresting but essential detail has been left out—that is how Captain Da Silva rigged his jury-rudder. It was so successful, too, that three days afterwards he navigated his ship into the difficult harbour of Port Lloyd with it,

none of the captains of whaling ships anchored there noticing any difference, except that there were one or two remarks about the *Grampus*'s wild steering and a little wonder as to what she was towing astern.

Before going into the harbour Captain Da Silva called all hands aft and made them a speech. He said : 'Men we're a-goin' in here fur repairs, wood, an' water. Any of ye 'at wants t' run away 'ud better make erp yewr mines before yew go fur the wust floggin' y' ever had w'en yew're brought back. 'N' yew will be, fur I'm goin' t' offer one hundred dollars reward fur any deserter brought back to the ship dead er alive. 'N' thar's lots er folks here as 'd kill a man fur one dollar, let alone a hundred. No gammin' allowed. This ship's ben runnin' slack. I'm goin' t' tighten things up a bit, Naow git.' And as all hands slunk away the skipper cast a triumphant glance at the officers as who should say, 'What are you going to do now ?' There was no answering look. Who could reply to a challenge like that without putting himself irrevocably in the wrong ?

Now it would be useless to recapitulate the proceedings at Port Lloyd, so tame and commonplace were they. The men were kept at work not merely from daylight till dark, but before daylight till after dark, doing all the thousand-and-one things needed when a whaleship comes into harbour after a long cruise. No boats other than her own were allowed near the ship, so the men got no fresh fruit, while no fresh beef or vegetables were sent on board by the skipper, so that all the fresh food obtained by the hungry men was fish, which, fortunately for them, bit at night and were caught in fairly large numbers. The

skipper went ashore but very little ; when he did, he now took Priscilla with him, closely muffled up so that no one should see her but himself. He saw none of his fellow-skippers, and cared nothing that he was the talk of the harbour. At the end of four days he ordered the windlass to be manned, and took the *Grampus* out to sea again, no man but himself knowing whither he was bound.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE LOSS OF THE *GRAMPUS*

IT could not possibly have escaped the memory of Mr. Court that he had been told by the skipper that their next cruising-place would be the 'Japan-ground.' Not that he was foolish enough to place any serious reliance upon anything said by Captain Da Silva, only he knew, as every whaling officer did in those days—I write of half a century ago—that the Japan grounds were the most prolific of all known haunts of the sperm whale. He was just a little startled, then, on getting clear of the Bonins, to find a course set S.W., which looked very much like getting down on to the Line grounds, and in any case could not mean that the *Grampus* was bound for the carrying out of the previously arranged programme. But he had such an implicit faith in the astounding ability of his skipper, and he felt so sure that even revenge would be made to wait until the money-making was over, that he did not trouble his head much about the rather startling change in the course. He could not know, of course, what Captain Da Silva did, that the common talk of Port Lloyd had been the inexplicable absence of sperm whales from the Japan grounds that season, neither could he tell by what curious chain of reasoning,

amounting almost to instinct, the skipper had decided upon going south among the islands and gradually working his way down to the Line whaling grounds.

For two days they steered S.E., and then, as if in justification of the skipper's foresight, they ran into a vast school of whales. Now, without going over previously well-trodden ground, I may remark that it will have been noticed how on board a whale-ship, as in an army, things may be done by officers with impunity in time of war that would certainly cause a mutiny in time of peace. And the skipper's eyes glistened as the boats took the water at the thought of how, during the coming campaign, he would take the last ounce out of his officers and men, making them pay most dearly for any little 'let-up' they might have enjoyed during his enforced retirement. One other step he had taken which I have omitted to mention, the separation of Rube and Mr. Pease, taking the former to pull his own midship oar, and putting the latter under his third mate, a Portuguese very much after his own heart.

Now for the next three months Reuben led the life of a daily martyr, a galley slave. The ship seemed never to be out of sight of whales, and exercising the greatest possible skill in the manipulation of his forces, the skipper managed to keep the war going continually, favoured as the ship was by the finest of weather. But he never in the midst of all his multifarious energies forgot for one hour the exercise of his awful animosity towards Reuben. The other Americans suffered also, but in a much lesser degree. It was Reuben who for any fault

committed by anyone in the boat was smitten with the heavy oak tiller over head or shoulders or face, Reuben who was selected for every dangerous, filthy, and heavy piece of work ; Reuben, in fact, saved the rest of his white shipmates much pain and trouble by being the lightning conductor, attracting nearly all the skipper's cruelty. And strangely enough, it seemed to make little difference to him. He did not smile so sweetly as he used to do, and his rather worn face wore a puzzled look that was very pathetic. But he never resented any of his ill-treatment, never seemed to notice it, in fact, after the first week or two.

What the condition of the ship became during those three strenuous months I do not propose attempting to describe. Only the pen of a Zola could do it justice, and the result would be almost, if not quite, unreadable to any cleanly living person. She was an offence to the clean, wide sea—much worse, indeed, than she was in the Mozambique Channel in respect of foulness, but not so bad with regard to health, because of the sweet breeze that steadily blew, and kept clearing off some of the miasma she exhaled. The skipper, however, alarmed for the health of Priscilla, for the reasons before noted, caused a little bower to be built on the top of the tiny deck aft, and did away with the spanker boom so that it (the bower) should not be disturbed. Here Priscilla sat all day long carefully screened from the smell as far as could be, and exposed to the fresh air. And, although she naturally suffered very much, as she always had done, since first she came on board, from lack of exercise, she became better in her general health, and more ready to take a

little interest in life than she had been for a long time. Nevertheless, little as her ship surroundings had ever power to impress her, she got very weary of the incessant inflow of greasy masses from overside, heartily sick of the aroma of slaughter. Also it seemed to her as if, instead of her husband growing more and more satisfied at the way in which he was accumulating wealth without any other ship near to share his good fortune, he became ever more morose and scowling. Nor was she wrong. The check to his cruelty which he had received worried him like a green wound, and all his prosperity was not nearly sufficient to compensate him for the loss of prestige he felt he had endured. If only, without destroying the efficiency of his ship's company, he could have set his foot upon the neck of those pale-faced men of an alien race, who, despite his masterfulness, had succeeded in great measure in setting themselves free from his tyranny, and who now strode before him with erect heads and clear eyes! The story of Haman is no myth. It is being repeated all around us every day, and I do not know of any more cogent proof of the existence of the devil than this.

At last the whales seemed to have learned their lesson, and began to fight shy of this lonely ship which had transferred so many of them to her own interior. No longer did they crowd around like a flock of frightened sheep awaiting the butcher and unable to see whither to flee in all that wide expanse of ocean. There came a time when the thoroughly wearied men were able to, not rest, but find an intensely welcome relief from the all-pervading filth in strenuously endeavouring to cleanse it away. And

although they worked just as hard as ever, they went about their altered occupation with something like enthusiasm.

Meanwhile the skipper had by frequent secret conferences, by sundry quietly bestowed tots of grog, and such grim pleasantries as he could give utterance to, been endeavouring quite successfully to regain his former status among his countrymen. Mr. Court saw, in common with every other white man on board, the trend of matters, and passed, therefore, many uneasy hours, unable to formulate any plans, since he knew not what was brewing except that it meant mischief for him and his compatriots. But in the absence of any overt act of offence on the part of the skipper he could take no step, he could only whisper Mr. Winslow to keep a bright look-out for whatever devilry might be afloat. What troubled him principally was his utter want of knowledge of the ship's whereabouts. This is always a hardship at sea even under the best conditions, and if sailors were only to allow their minds to dwell upon the fact that they are not allowed by the skipper to know even the approximate position of the ship there would be far more discontent than there is now. I have been in a ship on a passage of nearly seven months between Liverpool and an Indian port, and during the whole of that time not one foremast hand ever knew the ship's position within a thousand miles, so carefully was the secret guarded. And I have been in ships where the skipper refused to allow his mate to know, would not let him take an observation, seeming to take some insane pleasure in knowing that he alone of the ship's company had any idea where

upon that vast blank space of sea the tiny dot of a ship was poised.

Thus it was in the *Grampus*, when at the last clearing up certain sail was set, and a definite course to the eastward was steered. Indications of land were many, for they were now in that part of the Pacific where Nature would appear to have her busiest workshops; where islands rise in a few hours from unknown depths and isolated patches of land are suddenly met with, summits of submerged mountains rivalling the Himalayas in their tremendous altitudes. So, although no more whales were seen, the watchers at the masthead scarcely passed an hour without reporting some new appearance, some discolouration of the bright sea that upon nearer approach resolved itself into a floating island of weed about which played an innumerable company of bright-hued fish making the water foam again with their blithe gambols. Or a derelict cocoa-palm torn from its reef-edge moorings, and long since denuded of its feathery crown, floated by, recognisable only to a whaleman's eye as anything belonging to earth at all from the wealth of parasitic life which had accumulated upon it, making it look more like the head of some vast sea-serpent with a snowy mane than anything else the mind can depict. An occasional canoe, water-logged or bottom-up, floated along, making the watcher wonder where the recent occupant had gone, and what manner of struggle he or she made for life ere the fateful moment came when the sea claimed its toll as of right.

All through this pleasant time Priscilla kept her vigil during the daylight hours in her breezy house

aloft, above the working people's heads. There was a sort of placid wonder why the Captain should have so radically altered in his behaviour towards her. Benumbed as her faculties had undoubtedly become, since she had lived up on the after-deck she had begun to regain a certain interest in life which had not been possible to her while confined to the cabin. And she certainly found herself speculating upon the change in her husband. She noticed that he was less brutal in his behaviour to the crew, too, as far as physical ill-treatment went, but, of course, she did not know the cause. There was no easement of the hardships of their lives, nor any relenting in those fierce black eyes when looking upon a subordinate. But when his gaze fell upon her it changed into the puzzled, frightened glance of the savage face to face with the unknown, and dominated by an illogical fear, a state of mind which culminates in a sudden plunge into nameless cruelties.

She and her husband never held any conversation, their intercourse being limited to monosyllables almost. Discussion was out of the question, since she was docile as a well-trained dog, and besides did not seem to care about anything sufficiently to discuss it. Yet all unknown to her, a change was taking place in her mind. A renewed interest in life was springing up there. It may have been her long contemplation of the ever-wonderful and changeful life of the sea, but I am inclined to think that it was the intensity of that unknown love burning in one loyal breast near her, the outpouring of those fervent supplications for her well-being that Reuben was continually offering communicating something of

their own force in some mysterious way, not understandable as yet, but some day surely to be explained to us. At last, after about a fortnight of this pleasant sailing, she came up to her little haven of refuge to witness a scene of almost fairy-like loveliness. Stretching away to the northward like a cluster of jewels set upon the shining bosom of the sea was a group of islands. Some rose sheer from the waves that rolled creamily against their jet-black bases, just failing to reach the tender festoons of every shade of green that clothed them from high-water mark to summit. Others glittered in dazzling white against the intense blue of the quiet lagoon, shielded from all ruffling by a barrier of living rock encircling them, and crested with a mighty feather of purest white as the great swell surged up against it, and found its onward sweep effectually stayed. Others from serene palm-fringed heights sloped sweetly seaward to inviting beaches of all colours sheltered from any onslaught of waves and apparently inviting the weary seafarer to come and rest himself after all his ocean wanderings.

Quite close to the ship was a long, formidable barrier of black rocks, outliers of the main group, whose jagged, saw-like teeth snarled threateningly up from the fret and foam of the sea around. But even they were robbed of half their terrors by the beautiful play of light and colour around them, gift of the golden sun which hung in the limpid sky, shedding his fervent fires upon sea and land, and investing the most commonplace objects with supreme beauty. As Priscilla gazed upon the lovely scene she felt the tears steal down her cheeks: the whole

panorama appealed to her innate sense of loveliness so strongly that the happy tears would come, and her heart was lifted by the adoring creature's joy in the Creator's lovely handiwork. She forgot all else in the glories of the present scene, took no heed of the swift changing of the view as the homely old ship glided past that long, long barrier through the smoothest and brightest of seas. She took no heed of the skilful handling of the ship, all her mind being bent upon the wonders overside. It seemed to her as if now for the first time she understood what voyaging really meant, as if only now was she realising some of the impressions given her long ago in reading records of wonderful voyages. A faint flush mounted into her pale cheeks, her breath came and went quickly through her parted lips, and she was nearer happiness than she had been since the first week out from home.

Suddenly she became conscious of an apparent increase in the wind, caused by an alteration in the vessel's course, bringing her close-hauled, and like magic the whole scene changed. The ship was now running in between a wide opening in the great barrier before mentioned, where on either side of her the frowning rocks with their white crests of foam stopped abruptly in a sea of deepest blue. Ahead this lovely colour took a dozen different shades from inequality in the depth, and here and there, where a patch of coral neared the surface and the sun's rays touched its summit through the intervening water, there was a blending of hues that would make an artist despair.

Thus, piloted with the utmost skill by the skipper, the *Grampus* drew near the main group of islands,

sheltered as they were by all this intricate network of reefs from any roughness of water, and, finally, turning sharply to starboard, she came up into the wind behind a low bluff, and by her own impetus forged ahead into a little bay, sheltered from every wind of heaven, bordered by a snow-white beach, which, in its turn, was fringed by tropical growth of trees and shrubs of many kinds, and looking an ideal haven of rest. Midway of the bay's semicircle, and at less than half a mile from the beach, at a hoarse shout from the skipper the anchor rattled down, its crash and roar awakening echoes that long resounded like peals of distant thunder. Then the shouts of the officers succeeded as they gave the necessary orders for furling sails and clearing up the ship generally. And in half-an-hour, when the word 'supper' was given, an intense hush as of the first Sabbath succeeded—a calm and peace over sea and land that fell upon Priscilla's heart like the touch of a mother's cool hand upon the hot brow of her ailing child.

Captain Da Silva's officers, however, were far from enjoying a like serenity of mind. That very peace which was so grateful to an unknowing one was to them like the calm preceding the outburst of a hurricane. They looked anxiously around, precluded from consulting each other by their absurd relations, yet fearing the worst. Then the skipper, going below and summoning his unfortunate steward, had the 'trade,' always carried by these ships in that day for the purpose of barter among the islands, brought out and placed in readiness for conveyance on deck. His (the skipper's) plans had long been

made, but only his Portuguese accomplices on board knew anything of them. As far back as the visit to Brava he had been preparing for this event, when that load of cases of most potent liquor was brought on board. And now it was not so much the possibility of treachery on the part of the natives as the ruin of his plan of pleasure (?) which made him anxiously scan beach and bay for any sign of human life.

The sun neared the horizon, the busy fishing birds began to fly shoreward to their nests laden with the fruits of their labours, and the fresh sweetness of the coming night began to make itself felt. Then, as if at a given signal, a whole fleet of canoes came rushing round the headland into the bay, the water foaming around them under the strokes of multitudinous paddles. As they neared the ship it was to be seen that each canoe carried a green branch with streamers of white 'tapa' or native cloth, betokening peace, also that the still green coverts ashore had suddenly burst into life and scores of dusky female forms were hurling themselves into the water, and almost like denizens of the deep sea were rushing towards the ship. A few sharp orders from the skipper, and the Portuguese members of the crew hurried aft to assist him in the handing and distribution of his presents. They had barely got the things on deck when with yells of delight the natives reached the vessel, climbing on board everywhere like an invasion of happy children without one thought save the joyful indulgence of idle infantile curiosity. Priscilla had previously retired, being sternly ordered below by her husband as soon as the natives were seen, and in the little state-room she

sat listening with mingled feelings to the hubbub prevailing on deck, not knowing what it meant.

It was well that she did not, for there was now commencing on board the *Grampus* one of those orgies which have done so much to hinder the spread of Christianity among these savage isles. There is no danger that I should attempt to particularise ; that, I am sorry to say, has been done *ad nauseam*, and to what good end I am unable to see. Even the bald official records of such scenes strike a chill of horror into any decent mind, but they also leave a sense of profound gratitude that in spite of all these dire hindrances to the spread of the Gospel it does spread, it is embraced by these simple children of Nature, so apt to be influenced by the latest impression, especially if that impression be evil. Every careful reader of South Sea Island records must have noticed the frequency with which the good work of the missionaries—and, let it be said, in all justice, the good work of the honest, sober, truthful, and decent trader—has been undone by the infernal exploits of a crew of blackguards coming soon after. Also, it must have been seen how frequently the ill-usage (in the worst sense) of the confiding but undiscriminating natives by some bad ship's crew has led to the awful massacre of the next ship's company calling there, and the subsequent laying waste of the village of these dispensers of wild justice. In Stevenson's 'Wrecker' one of the most appalling facts is stated quite dispassionately concerning the murder of Bishop Patterson, and it makes the flesh creep. Here it is :—

' He was tried for his life in Fiji in Sir Arthur Gordon's time, and if ever he prayed at all, the name

of Sir Arthur was certainly not forgotten. He was speared in seven places in New Ireland—the same time his mate was killed—the famous outrage on board the brig *Jolly Roger*, but *the treacherous savages made little by their wickedness* (the italics are mine) ‘and Bostock, in spite of their teeth, got seventy-five head of volunteer (?) labour on board, of whom not more than a dozen died of injuries. He had a hand besides in the amiable pleasantry which cost the life of Patteson ; and when the sham bishop landed, prayed, and gave his benediction to the natives, Bostock, arrayed in a female chemise out of the trade-room, had stood at his right hand and boomed Amens. This, when he was sure he was among good fellows, was his favourite yarn. “Two hundred head of labour for a hatful of Amens,” he used to name the tale ; and its sequel, the death of the real bishop, struck him as a circumstance of extraordinary humour.’

It was evident to Mr. Court at once what his commander had come into this bay for, and he was in a greater difficulty than ever. The ship was practically in possession of the natives, all uproariously good humoured, but all, liable to pass at once from riotous pleasantry to mad fury of slaughter. The only comfort he had was that no natives were allowed to invade the cabin. The foc’s’le, the half-deck, was overrun by them, and nearly all the crew had been induced to join them in their curious gambols—all the more curious that the skipper had liberally distributed his fire-water among them. Reuben, at the first descent of native men and women into the foc’s’le, had made his way on deck and

into the fore-top, then along the topgallant stay he had climbed to the main-crosstrees, and in similar fashion had reached the mizen-top. Here he determined to camp until morning with some vague idea of watching over the safety of *Priscilla*, and at the least, descending among the natives if they should prove treacherous (?) and losing his life in her defence. From his lofty perch he looked down upon that ugly scene, and his clean soul revolted at it. But he saw to his intense satisfaction the actors therein gradually sink to slumber, overcome by fatigue, and by midnight the pale moon shone down upon heaps of sleepers in all sorts of varied attitudes, exposing shamefinesses that the tender dark had hidden. And overwearied at last he slept also.

The morning brought tumult, a renewal of the orgies of the previous night. All work, discipline, order, seemed to be at an end. The skipper, like a maddened Bacchanal, swayed to and fro between two dusky nymphs, daughters of the paramount chief, and Mr. Court, looking at him with disgust, could take no steps. Once, indeed, finding a huge native endeavouring to force his body down through the insufficient opening of the cabin skylight, the mate almost forgot the stern control he had placed upon himself, and was just about to seize the man fiercely and hurl him away when he was seized from behind, and turning furiously to see who it was he looked into the mild but fearless eyes of Reuben, who said, 'For heaven's sake, sir, don't anger them—for her sake.' That was all, and Mr. Court's anger died instantly away.

But none of the devoted few who throughout this

terrible time retained their manliness and clean living were able to retain much hope that a final and terribly complete disaster could be avoided. And all they could do was to look helplessly on and see it coming, powerless to avert it. For the skipper, in spite of the madness of his orgies, not only kept cunning watch over his end of the ship, and allowed no native, whether male or female, to enter the cabin, but he also kept the sober ones in view also, and by this I do not merely mean those to whom he had handed out drink—his own countrymen—but those of the white men who had allowed themselves to wallow in debauchery.

The end came very suddenly, on the fourth night. All the revellers had been carrying on furiously, with but brief intervals of exhaustion, and the number of natives was greatly increased by fresh arrivals from some of the outlying islands. Several serious quarrels had broken out, and been patched up without bloodshed, and there was much murmuring among the natives because the supply of liquor seemed to be failing—at any rate, the Captain was not so free with it as he had been. More, a belief had steadily gained ground among them that something of great value was secured in that after-part of the ship into which none of them had been permitted to penetrate. Now, whether either of these causes had anything to do with the final catastrophe, or whether it was just an outburst of savagery like the mischief of petulant children, no one will ever know, but the fact remains that about midnight there was a strong smell of fire, and before any of the sleeping roysterers had awakened, tall flames upreared their

terrible shapes from the main-hatch, and a roar as of some vast furnace was heard. Almost in an instant the ship was alive with men running hither and thither as if dazed, others fiercely fighting, others drawing water in buckets, and casting it into the glowing furnace of the main-hatch without the slightest appreciable effect. In the midst of it all four men kept their heads clear—Reuben, Mr. Court, Mr. Winslow, and Mr. Pease. As it was very evident at an early stage that the fire, even if attacked by competent hands, was unsubduable, and that, moreover, the natives were bent not only upon destroying the ship but the lives of every European on board, these four devoted all their energies to the means of escape. The Captain was somewhere in the midst of the yelling crowd, fighting fiercely, no doubt, his voice heard occasionally above the tumult, so that no counsel could be taken with him. And to make the confusion still more terrible, blinding columns of smoke began bursting, as it seemed, out of every crevice of the vessel. This decided Reuben that the time had come to act finally, and tearing the cabin door off its hinges by one effort of his strength, he rushed below, and seizing the half-suffocated Priscilla in his arms bore her on deck, and, half-blinded, groped his way to the port quarter boat, and placed her safely in the stern sheets. He had previously 'racked' the falls—that is, fastened two of the parts of each together—and had thrown the coils into the boat. Now he took a round turn round the midship thwart with both the falls, and, holding them firmly, went to both ends of the boat consecutively and cut the rackings, the boat falling a foot or so

each time with an ugly jerk. Then he lowered away handsomely, feeling sure that in the hubbub on deck the rattle of the blocks would never be noticed. She took the water, he unhooked and pushed off, full of anguish of mind as to the fate of his three friends, but not knowing what to do for them without risking the helpless woman for whom he would gladly have suffered any pain or manner of death.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### AND LAST

IT may well be wondered why in the much-abused name of common-sense the mariners on board the *Grampus* did not, seeing the hopelessness of saving their vessel, make for the boats and leave her. But it must be remembered that, apart from the fact that they were nearly all mixed up in that horrible compost of savagery, there were really only three of them who had any clearness of head remaining. These three, whom I have already named, were busy preparing the starboard quarter boat for leaving when suddenly there burst upon them, like a flood, a mob of natives, and before they had time to draw their weapons they were overpowered, and another dark deed was consummated. As so often has happened in South Sea Island story, the innocent suffered equally with the guilty—indeed, more, for one guilty man escaped for a time. Off in the dark Reuben waited, all his nerves raw with anxiety for those who would never come. What to do he did not know, for light and graceful as a whaleboat is when she has her full complement of men on board, she is cumbrous as a barge to be handled by one man at any time without sail; and when to that one man's task is added the hampering of darkness and ignorance

of the way he should go, the hill of difficulty becomes well-nigh insurmountable.

Reuben stood with his feet upon the two cleats, made and fastened for the purpose of raising the steersman's body, one on each side of the stern-sheets, staring with smarting eyes into the smoky, flame-stabbed darkness where the ship lay. Occasionally a great spurt of blood-red fire lit up sea, shore, and sky, and made him tremble for fear of discovery ; then a wild chorus of yells and shrieks chilled his blood as he pictured mentally the scene being enacted on board. Strangely enough, he had quite forgotten his own peril, had forgotten how many were the native canoes, how impossible it would be for him to propel that heavy boat one quarter as fast as those amphibious natives could swim after him if once they realised his departure. Ah ! The boat sagged heavily to one side, and in over the bluff of the bow climbed a dark figure, gasping as if its chest was being rent asunder. Reuben sprang forward, and found it was the skipper. The two men stared at each other for a moment ; then the skipper gurgled out, 'Oars, pull for life ; all dead but me.' And as he spoke he seized an oar and began to pull. Reuben said no word, but took another, and with the long, splendid stroke of the whaler they propelled the beautiful craft silently seaward, passing the headland safely and unobserved. A light breeze was blowing, and no sooner were they clear of the head than the skipper said, his native gruffness asserting itself even in that terrible hour, 'Come, lend a hand 'n' git th' mast up. She'll go twice as fast under sail. Git a move on ye.' It was a heavy task for two men, one

of whom was evidently fighting hard against overpowering weakness, but Reuben's great strength again stood him in good stead, and before ten minutes had elapsed the big sail was bellying bravely forward, and the boat, heading out into the night, was gently bowing to the incoming Pacific swell, seeming eager to escape from those awful shores.

Captain Da Silva took the steer-oar, and with something of his old skill laid the boat on the direct course for the nearest reef-opening, steering by the white curdlings on the reef-tops around, which showed up most conspicuously against the dark of the night. Astern the *Grampus*, now one vast flame, filled the sky with a lurid glare, and the smoke of her burning came floating over the heads of the fugitives in a long grey cloud. For a space of about half an hour not a word was spoken by either of the men. Then suddenly the skipper said sharply, 'Who's this?' pointing to the motionless figure lying in the stern sheets at his feet as if he had only just seen it.

'It's yewr wife, Cap'n,' answered Rube in the most matter-of-fact manner possible.

'How 'd she kem here?' demanded the skipper again.

'I brought her, sir,' replied Rube, without the slightest change of voice.

'Oh, yew did, eh?' said the skipper faintly. And then stooping and letting go his hold of the oar, he laid his hand upon the unconscious woman and said, 'R y' all right, Pris? I'm dresful sorry t' have brung ye t' this; but I kain't do nothin' f'r y' naow. I'm mighty sick man myself.' And with that word he fell forward in a heap fainting.

This brought Rube aft on the jump, but it was well for him that Priscilla had been roused from her curious stupor and was able to attend to her husband, as the steering of the boat demanded all one man's attention now.

They were nearing the reef passage, and the swell meeting them was causing the boat to leap as she surmounted its crests, and demanding a very steady hand at the steer-oar to keep her bow on to it. Besides, the channel was barely five boats' lengths wide, and the foam of the incoming breakers almost obscured it at times. Still Rube steered seaward with a steady hand, and presently with a sigh of relief he saw the gallant craft shoot out from between those walls of white on to the dark, free ocean beyond. Then he was about to try and ship the rudder, which always hangs alongside, when he heard her voice saying :

'Would you please look at the Captain? I think he has fainted, or something, and his clothes are all sticky, as well as wet.'

Rube answered thickly, 'Certainly, ma'am, only yew must 'scuse me if I divide my 'tention between him and the boat. She wants a good deal of steering just now, an' we kain't afford to linger about here, in case we ain't far enough from that awful place by sun-up.'

Then Rube stooped down and peered into the skipper's face, feeling all over his body at the same time and noting the sticky feeling of which she spoke. But he knew no more of what it was than she, and as he had no light he could not investigate. And so he gave all his attention to the navigation of the boat

away from those dangerous shores while yet the land wind held, knowing full well that it would die away before dawn and the sea breeze come with the sun. Then if he were not well off the land he would run great risk of being caught by the natives, whose blood thirst would by this time be unassuageable.

Priscilla, only conscious apparently of one fact, that her husband needed her ministrations, was doing her best under those sadly hampered conditions to give them. That she was tossing about on the open sea in a small boat with only her unconscious husband and one sailor to keep her company did not seem to impress her at all. And yet it would be grievous if anyone reading her story should think of her scornfully as having degenerated under her terrible trials into something very much resembling an imbecile. Oh, no ; really her present state of mind had been reached through a series of shocks that would have driven a weaker woman to death or madness, but in her case had providentially resulted in a sort of calm acceptance, without any apparent surprise, of whatever strange experiences should befall her. Mechanically she bathed her husband's face with her handkerchief dipped in the water overside, and, warned by his stertorous breathing, she loosed his neckband and managed to raise his head on to her lap. And thus she sat quietly enduring the cramping of her limbs, accepting the sharp pains shooting through her body as inevitable, and making no sound.

A hush stole over the dark sea as the wind died away, broken only by the heavy occasional flap of the now useless sail. Without a word Reuben shipped the steer-oar and stepped lightly forward.

In a minute or two he had tightly furled the sail and taken an extra pull at the backstays and stay, after deciding that owing to his being single-handed and not sure of his power to elevate it again he must take the risk of being seen through leaving the mast standing. He did not realise how far the swift boat had glided under the gentle stress of the light land breeze during those past hours of darkness. With almost hungry eagerness he waited for the dawn, noted the first faint blush as of surprise tinting the eastern sky, watched with growing feelings of worship tremulous threads of delicate colour running searchingly into the sombre concave of the departing night, saw the flood of palest golden light appear, and then springing into its midst ablaze with glory, majesty, and life, the sun. And the land out of sight. His head sank upon his bosom, and he thanked God for deliverance. Yet, having done so, he could not help a sinking at his heart as he looked aft at those two crouching forms—one so inexpressibly precious to him, the other a sacred charge because—well, because of right and truth and honour. He knew that upon him, under God, depended their lives, although he did not then know how far gone the skipper was. And just one little moan escaped him as he thought how ill-provided they were for a long cruise in those unfrequented seas. Then hope revived again as he felt, because of his ignorance, that he could not sail far in any direction without making land, and land meant food and water, and (but that he did not trouble about) savages, cannibals made, if possible, worse than they were by nature by the utter villainy of white men far more culpable than they.

Then, treading softly as a cat, he stepped over the thwarts aft again, and as he did so Priscilla lifted her wan face to his, saying calmly :

‘Are we safe from pursuit?’

Rube nodded : he could not trust himself to speak.

‘Then, will you see what you can do for Captain Da Silva. I—I am afraid he is badly injured.’

With one glance at the boat fore and aft and a satisfied noting of the little darkness on the water which betokened the coming breeze, Rube obeyed, and stooped to the Captain’s side. As soon as he did so he saw to his horror that the stickiness they had both felt during the darkness was blood ; the skipper had been wounded in many places, and his blood, aided by the salt water, had congealed upon him and stopped its own flow, or he would have been dead long before.

‘Ma’am,’ said Rube unsteadily, ‘I’ll dew my best fur the Cap’n, but, as yew k’n see, that isn’t much. He’s badly cut, an’ I daren’t interfere with his hurts ‘cause at present they’ve stopped bleedin’, and if I tech him an’ start ‘em agen I mayn’t be able to stanch th’ flow then. Pity I got nothin’ t’ give him but a little soak biscuit an’ water. P’raps you’ll take a little yewrself, ma’am, at the same time t’ keep up yewr strength and courage.’

The ghost of a smile flickered for a second about her white lips, and she said simply, ‘Thank you. You are very kind. What shall I call you?’

He answered shortly, with a tightening at the heart, ‘My name’s Rube, ma’am—at least, that’s what I get usually. Call me thet, if ye don’t mind.’

And then he busied himself with the preparation of the simple meal, measuring crumb and drop as if each represented so many minutes of life, and deciding that, as for himself, he could go a much longer time yet before encroaching upon the small stock which must suffice for them all. The breeze freshening, he set the sail again, and, hauling the boat's head as near the wind as she would lie, found that she would make about E.N.E. on the starboard tack —by guess, that is, for there was no compass in the boat. And this course he chose, not because he knew whither it would lead them, but because he saw that it was taking them well away from those accursed isles, of whose very name and whereabouts he was ignorant. And having got the boat so easily trimmed that by lashing the tiller at a certain angle she would steer herself, coming up and falling off just as if a hand was at the helm, he turned his attention again to the skipper and his wife, finding that the former had returned to a reasonable appreciation of his surroundings and was quietly taking the biscuit pap from Priscilla's fingers. His filmy eyes lighted upon Reuben, and he said in low but clear tones :

'Ah ! yew never gut that floggin' I promised ye. Wall, I doan' know as I'm sorry that yew missed it. I guess I ben a pretty hard case ever sence I gut a chance t' be, 'n' I don't believe I ever ben sorry fur anything I ever done befo'. I felt mad, but not sorry —no, never. 'N' I thought I'd go some day-jest like that. 'N' now I kain't. Pris' (turning to his wife with sudden energy), 'I want yew t' fergive me—I've done y' a power of harm. I ben an awful brute t' ye. Wut I ben t' th' men don' matter—that's wut

they're aboard fur—but yew ben good t' me, 'n' I ben a devil t' yew. Naow I'm a-dyin', 'n' I don' care a plunk fer thet, but I'd like y' t' know I'm sorry fur wut I done t' ye. Ez fur this galoot, I don't know who he is er wut he is, 'n' ef I a-hed my way with him he'd a-hed a pretty tough time, but I do b'lieve he ain't half bad. Kiender soft mebbe fur all he's so big an' hefty, but I think he'll put ye through in shape. An'——' But then the voice suddenly melted into a few unintelligible sounds, and again the skipper's head sank on to his wife's lap and he was silent in another swoon. Rube looked at him helplessly for a moment, then, reflecting that the best thing for him would be to concentrate his mind upon the only thing he could do—viz., the handling of the boat—he stepped thoughtfully back to the tiller, and cast his eye first over the boat herself, then all around. She was going sweetly along, unguided, like a creature of intelligence, and as if she needed no human intervention, so, satisfied of this, Rube busied himself in making everything within her as neat and ship-shape as possible. Having done all he could at this, he counted their treasured biscuit, felt the weight of the water supply, and looked inquiringly at Priscilla, holding up the little wooden beaker or piggin with one hand and pointing to the keg with the other. But Priscilla, moistening her parched lips as well as she could, shook her head, giving a meaning glance at the little bucket wherein he had soaked the biscuit of which she and the Captain had been partaking, to show him that there was still some left.

Just as Rube was wondering what he could do next for her comfort, and his own satisfaction, there

was a commotion in the water alongside, and with a series of sharp taps against the sides and bottom of the boat, half-a-dozen large flying-fish fell into her in their hurried rush upwards from the onslaught of a big albacore, which went sweeping past with one of their late comrades thwartwise in his mouth. In a moment Rube had gathered the welcome little wanderers together and hidden them all out of the sun's rays but one. This he cleaned with the utmost delicacy and filleted, cutting the fillets into dainty narrow strips. With half-a-dozen of them balanced on his knife-blade, he approached Priscilla, who had been watching him languidly, saying, 'Here, ma'am, is suthin' that'll dew yew and the skipper both good. It's cool and moist, an' ef yew shet yew eyes fur a minit yew'll be surprised haow easy yew can take it. Thousan's of people prefer it this way t' cooked. 'N' I'll dry some fur ye then, only it ain't so good fur ye because of its makin' y' thirsty, an' water's none too plentiful.' With utmost docility she roused herself, took the tender looking strips, and put one of them to her husband's cracked lips. His mouth opened mechanically and his jaws moved, but he had no power to swallow, and his breath began to come and go laboriously. Putting one hand under his head, she beckoned Rube with the other, whispering, 'Is he dying? Can't you *do* anything for him?'

With a fervent petition for aid to do the right thing, for wisdom to see it, Rube stepped to her side and took the Captain's weight off Priscilla's arm upon his own. There was, even to a man with as little experience of death as Rube's, but scanty room to doubt that Captain Da Silva was going to his account.

And then, incredible as it may seem to most of us, this simple-minded Christian man, forgetting all else but the pitiable plight of the sufferer before him, actually burst suddenly into earnest prayer that he might be spared—if only for a little while—spared to repent of the evil done and intended. But as he prayed he was conscious of something, he knew not what, driving into his mind the certainty that his prayer was not to be granted. That Ramon Da Silva had done all the direct ill he was to be allowed to do. Rube's voice ceased, the skipper's eyes opened, glazed and fixed, his lower jaw dropped heavily, and he was dead. Catching Priscilla's eyes fixed earnestly upon his face, Reuben said solemnly, 'He's dead, ma'am, and the rest is with God.' 'May God have mercy upon him now,' she replied.

Until the evening scarcely another word was spoken by either of them, both busy with their own thoughts. But just before sunset, Rube said questioningly, 'We kain't do no good, and may do much harm, by keeping the body any longer: d' you mind my offering up a prayer an' committin' it to th' deep?' She answered humbly, 'Do what you think is right—I am willing. God knows I have every confidence in you.' So Rube sank upon his knees on the thwart, and with bowed head commended the dead man to the mercy of the Merciful. Then he rose, and with a sudden heave of his great shoulders, lifted the piece of clay; there was a sullen splash, an eddy, and all that was mortal of Ramon Da Silva had disappeared for ever from human sight.

With an unutterable sense of relief Reuben turned to the business of living, and bringing forth his little

store of filleted fish and a handful of broken biscuits gently pressed Priscilla to eat. She at once commenced to try, only stipulating that he should also take something, for she felt sure that, since the catastrophe, at any rate, he had not broken his fast. He gravely acceded to her wish and began to eat, but had only taken two or three mouthfuls when he laid down the morsel he was conveying to his lips, put both hands to his face, and, his huge body shaken as with ague, burst into a tempest of sobs. Priscilla watched him in awe-stricken silence, until she, too, moved beyond bearing by such a passion in this quiet, self-possessed man, began to weep. But as soon as she did, Rube, by a tremendous effort, regained command of himself and began in tenderest fashion to speak such comforting words to her as his close acquaintance with the Source of all comfort had given him possession of. But be it noted, neither his consolation nor Priscilla's distress had any reference to their present desperate condition whatever. That apparently gave them no uneasiness. These tears of Priscilla's were due to reaction, to self-pity perhaps a little, but principally were an evidence of the passing away of an awful bondage. Such tears as a prisoner might shed on first emerging from a loathsome captivity in an underground dungeon into the blessed light of Heaven—free.

There is no need to enlarge upon the cause of Rube's breakdown : if it be not palpable, it would be futile to explain.

Now he was torn with a raging conflict between his desires and his fears. Would Priscilla, after all, love him? Dare he make himself known without

appearing to take any unmanly advantage of her helplessness, her utter need of some strong arm upon which to lean, whether she loved its owner or not so long as he was kind? Foolish—oh, yes, but quite natural where such faithful love as Rube's reigns in a man's heart, allied with such a distrust of self as he possessed. So he sat speaking to Priscilla such things as he found best to say with this backlash of harassing thoughts occupying one corner of his brain, and causing his eyes to shine with almost audible intensity. And presently lifting her head Priscilla's gaze met his. For a moment she stared spellbound, then gasped, 'Rube, it's *you*, it's *YOU*. O God, how good You are to me!' And she bent towards him. All his fears were forgotten now, all his delicate self-tormenting diffidences vanished like breath-mist from a diamond, and he took her to his broad breast as a mother takes her infant, yearningly, hungrily.

The boat sailed on steadily into the blankness of the horizon, hunger and thirst, and dreadful outlook all forgotten, and in that happy hour each lived a lifetime of perfect joy, feeling that, come what might, the price to pay would not be grudged by them. Then, with a sigh of perfect content, they released one another, and Rube, feeling as if the strength of ten lay in his great frame, the wisdom of a dozen old sea-captains had accumulated in his brain, set about preparing for the night. He felt ready to wrestle with death itself for her as Jacob did with the angel, and with no more fear. And she followed him with her eyes as he busied himself about the boat and made ready their tiny meal. It was so sweet to feel once

more the presence of unselfish love ready to do and dare all things for her. If the prospect of that wide sea-plain and their utter loneliness upon it, and the knowledge of their want of food, did for a moment give her a chilly feeling as of the approach of darkness, it was only momentary: one glance again at his bright, brave, calm face dispelled it, and brought instead the glow of perfect happiness—that is, as nearly perfect as a spirit clothed with flesh can feel.

They took their evening morsel of food, and uttered their evening prayers sitting hand in hand like little children, and with as little care or fear for the future as babes would have; they saw the bright sky darken into the violet of the night, while the gentle breeze held steadily and the boat still swept quietly forward to the east. Rube made Priscilla as comfortable as possible, sacrificing the jib's usefulness for the night in order to protect her from the drenching dew, and as she laid her head down upon his coat rolled up for a pillow she gave a happy little sigh, murmured, 'Thank you, dear,' put up her face to be kissed as a tired child would out of its cot, and went instantly to sleep. Rube, noting this with intense satisfaction, composed himself upon the little deck aft, where he could look down upon Priscilla's form, cast off the tiller, and, sitting with it under his arm, steered the boat steadily by the wind, still making, as nearly as he could judge by the stars, about a N.E. course. So through the night he sat, and dozed and woke alternately, never finding any alteration in the pose of that recumbent figure beneath him, never needing to do aught but just sit still and commune with his own thoughts. Strangely enough, do what

he would he could not feel any apprehension for the future. Again and again he endeavoured to depict Priscilla and himself dying of hunger and thirst under the great solemn eye of heaven. Again and again he recalled his experiences in the *Xiphias*' boat when all the bitterness of such a death was actually undergone, and the survivors were literally haled back from the dark entry of the grave. But no answering tremor came. Not even when he thought of his father and mother, those waiting, lonely figures sitting by their cosy but quiet fireside praying for him. Ah—that was it. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and whether he (and *she*) were to live or die, the peace which they were enjoying was undoubtedly due to that stream of real prayer ascending continually from the Eddy Homestead for the wanderers on unknown seas.

Therefore, in the morning, as daylight filled the sky, he faced the waking Priscilla with a countenance scarcely less bright. He drew her a bucket of water from overside, and recommended a sluicing of hands, and face, and neck, telling her that for the next half-hour it would be necessary for him to seat himself upon the bow and look steadfastly ahead in case in that clear dawn-light some vessel should be visible. And when such a toilet as she was able to make was completed, a word from her would bring him aft on the jump supposing his vigil were not over. She smiled gratefully, appreciatively; and met him presently, when in response to her call he came leaping aft, with a face so bright and rosy in spite of its thinness that an involuntary exclamation of wonder and admiration burst from him. Then they

sat down to their frugal breakfast of water and biscuit—the fish was now too stale to eat, unless they were much more ravenous than at present—and for sauce they had reminiscences, all that Rube could remember on both sides of the blank, and all that she *would* recall of the doings of her dead husband. Then Rube, interesting Priscilla greatly, produced a hook and line which he had found stowed away in the 'eyes' of the boat. Carefully mounting a strongly smelling flying fish upon the hook, he trolled it astern, and in a few minutes succeeded in flinging into the boat a beautiful coryphena, or dolphin as the sailor calls it, of over ten pounds in weight. A portion of its flesh was cut off, and preserved for bait, a portion was carefully prepared for the next meal—they did not mind raw fish now—and the rest cleansed, and cut in strips, was laid in the sun to dry. And then they thanked God, ate another meal, and took courage.

On the fourth morning, although they had caught plenty of fish—for in those prolific seas the deep-sea denizens swarm—they drank their last drop of water. They had husbanded it carefully, and as at the outset there was but little over a gallon, it had lasted well. But even now they did not feel dismayed. Amid their terrible surroundings they were quite, or nearly quite, happy. That same strange assurance enjoyed by Rube had communicated itself to Priscilla, and together they discussed their meeting with the dear old people, and all the wonderments that people so entirely ignorant of what had been happening since their departure might naturally be supposed to entertain. They caught a skip-jack that day, a kind of vivacious mackerel, weighing about five pounds,

and almost gaily munched its juicy flesh, which was so grateful to their already parching mouths.

Then, at the close of day, as usual—it seemed as if they had been thus associated for a lifetime—they prayed, kissed each other good-night, and Priscilla went to sleep, while Rube, as usual, sat erect and dozed. He was suddenly awakened by a great glare of light which dazzled him, proceeding from he knew not where. Next moment a clear voice sounded across the blackness following upon the blaze: 'Boat ahoy!' 'Hallo,' replied the deep tones of Rube. And then he saw the towering form of a ship, her green light glaring down at him as if in judicial inquiry just overhead. In fact, so close that only by putting his tiller hard over and bringing his boat up in the wind he escaped running into her with a crash. A side ladder was lowered, a couple of agile men glided down ropes into the boat, and in less than ten minutes Rube and Priscilla stood upon the deck of H.M.S. *Alcestis*, surveying ship, to whose splendid lookout they owed their rescue, and whose crew they had provided with a babblement of talk that was already surging throughout the remotest corners of the ship.

A cabin was immediately found for Priscilla, and the wardroom attendants could not sufficiently show their zeal and readiness to anticipate her every want. Rube, brought before a charming young-looking officer, was interrogated as to the how and why of this miraculous appearance in mid-Pacific in a boat, at night with one woman, but not before he had been offered and had refused a glass of grog and a cigar, and had accepted instead a plate of soup on the condition that some was first given to Priscilla.

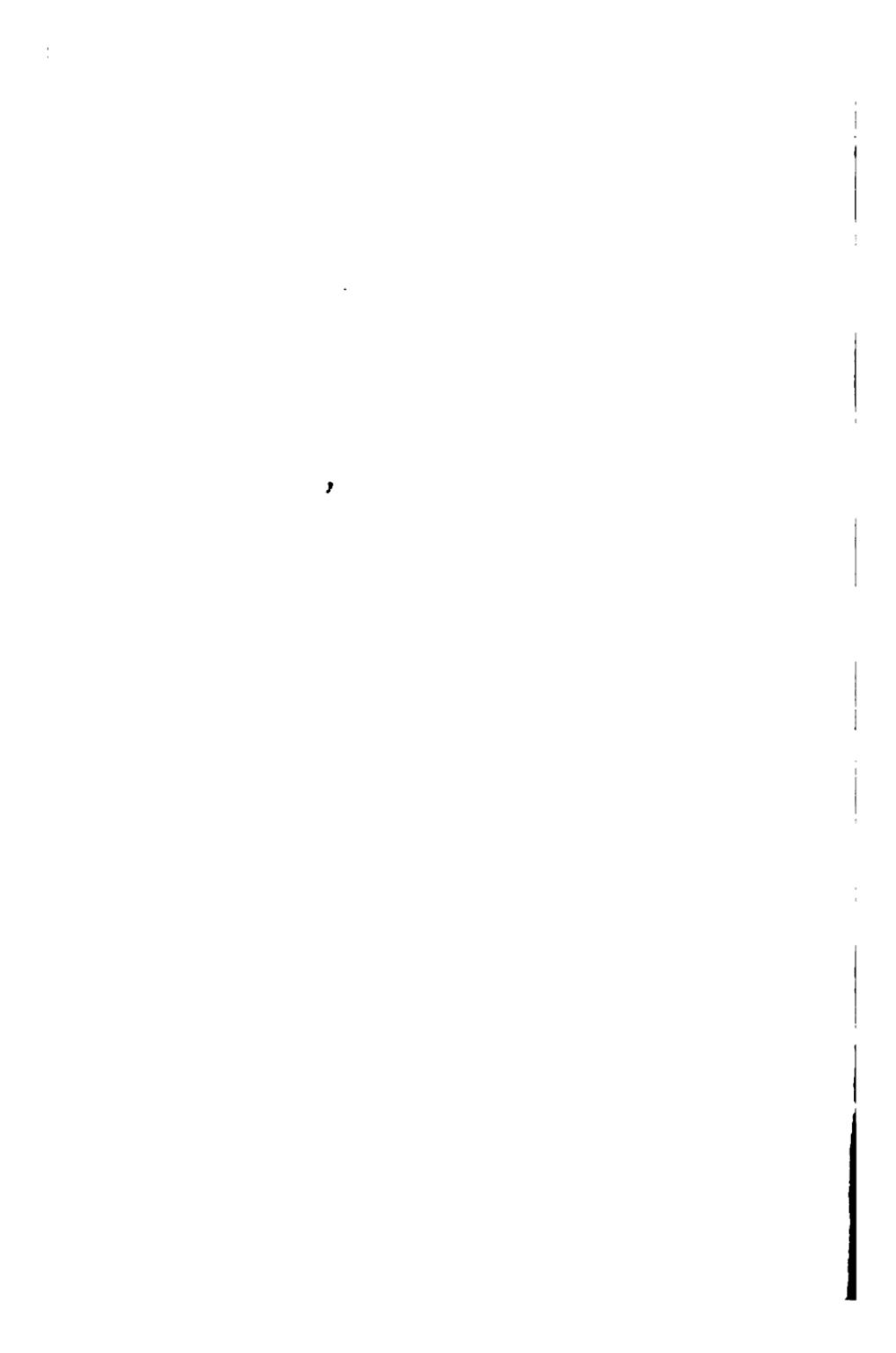
So Reuben told his tale to the Captain of the man-o'-war, and whether the sentry at the door had his ear to the keyhole all the while or not I don't know, but certain it is that almost as soon as Reuben retired for the rest of the night to a comfortable berth, having first visited Priscilla's cabin and found her supremely happy, his story was the common property of the ship's company, and he could have had any one of them shed blood, their own or another's, for him. Of that, of course, there was no need, but anyone who knows the British man-o'-warsman, officer or seaman, needs not to be told that on arrival at Honolulu the paymaster of the *Alcestis* handed over to Reuben a sum of money sufficient for all reasonable expenses and fare to Vermont. Among those *reasonable* expenses was included the cost of a wedding at the English church, to which over one hundred of the *Alcestis*' crew invited themselves, and made those proceedings vibrate with their own enthusiasm. I regret to say, though, that after escorting the newly wedded pair on board the mail steamer bound to 'Frisco, and cheering themselves hoarse as she departed, several of those gallant blue-jackets were found so full of spirits, animal and vegetable, that it became necessary for the preservation of the public peace to put them under lock and key, with serious results to themselves.

Reuben and his adoring wife had no more adventures. They were the heroes of the passengers and crew of the *Golden Gate*, and they had much ado to dodge the wily reporters in the Queen City of the West. Nor were they able to prevent the appearance of their histories (with such extraordinary verbal

embellishments as the said reporters deemed it necessary to add) in the flamboyant local newspapers. But in due time they found themselves travelling together the quiet moss-grown paths between Boston and the home farm, and arriving at the door of the Eddy Homestead to be received as the latest and best gifts of a loving God to the faithful old couple who had never wavered in the long waiting for them, nor doubted that they would come. Also it seems an anti-climax to record their settling down to a happy, useful, and loving life in the old farm of Priscilla's youth, kept in readiness for them by Rube's father against the day of their return.

It was somewhat of a wrench for them to be compelled to make a journey to New Bedford and depose to the circumstances in which the *Grampus* was lost, and there always remained a sense of something incomplete in Reuben's mind about the early days of his departure from New Bedford, and the intervening months before awaking on board the *Grampus*. But these ripples made no impression upon the steady flow of their stream of happiness. Brother Will came to see them from Chicago, portly and full of dollar-talk, being almost a millionaire, and departed West again, feeling that there was, after all, something which even dollars could not buy, and that Rube and his sister possessed the chief of those things.

Here let us leave the much-tried pair, nestling under the wing of the Loving Father, whose watchful care had been over them through all their perils, being serenely carried onwards to a golden sunset.



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